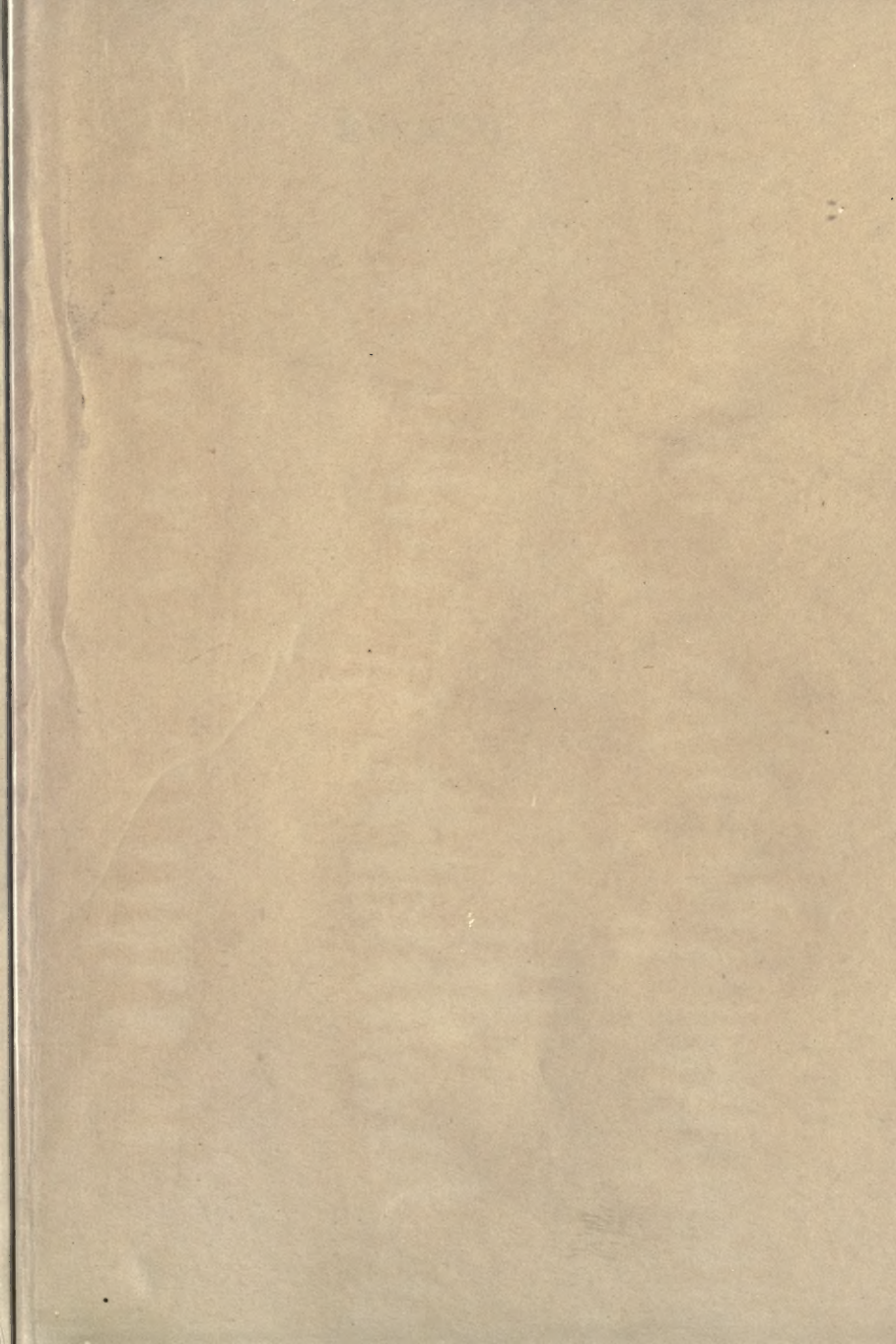
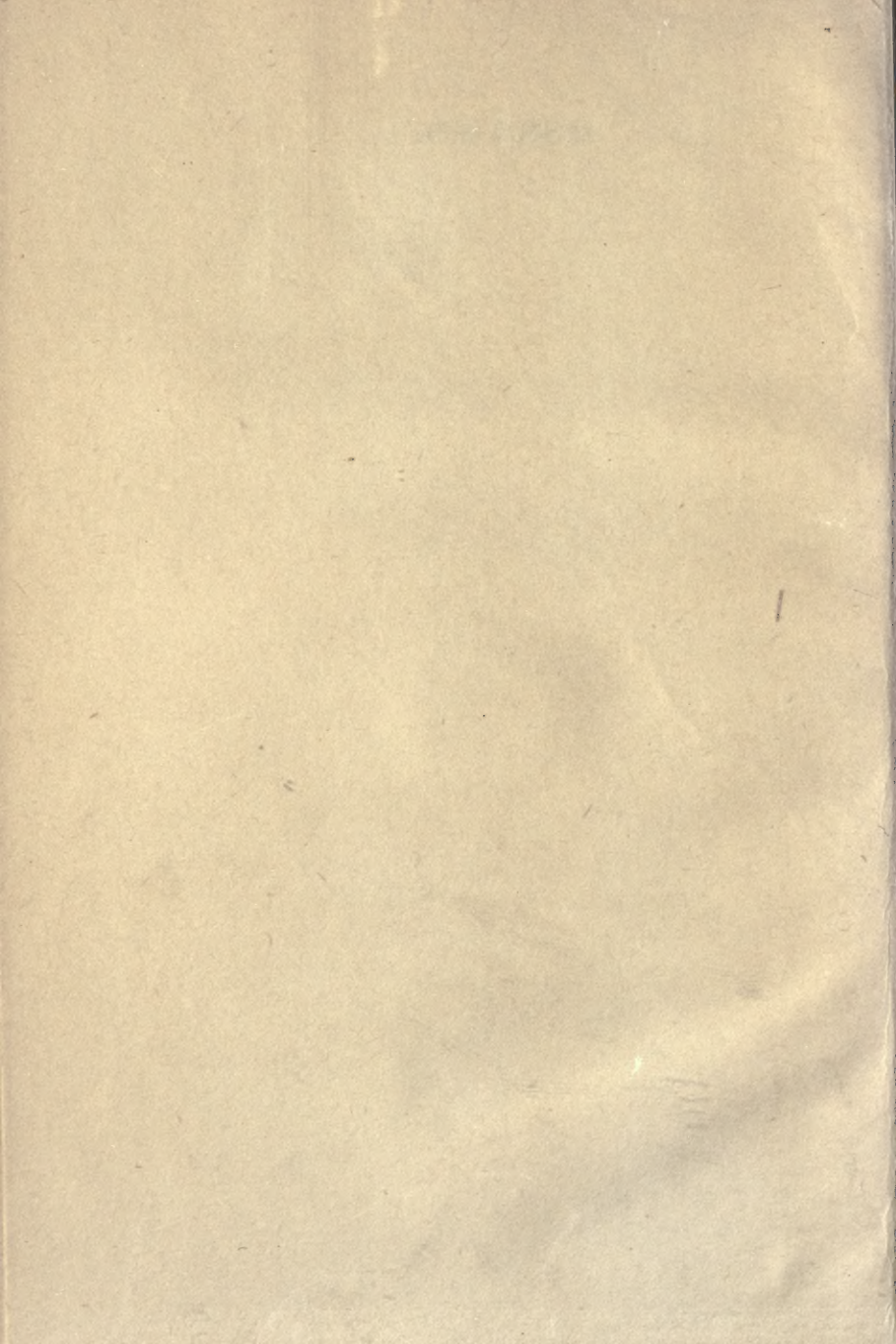


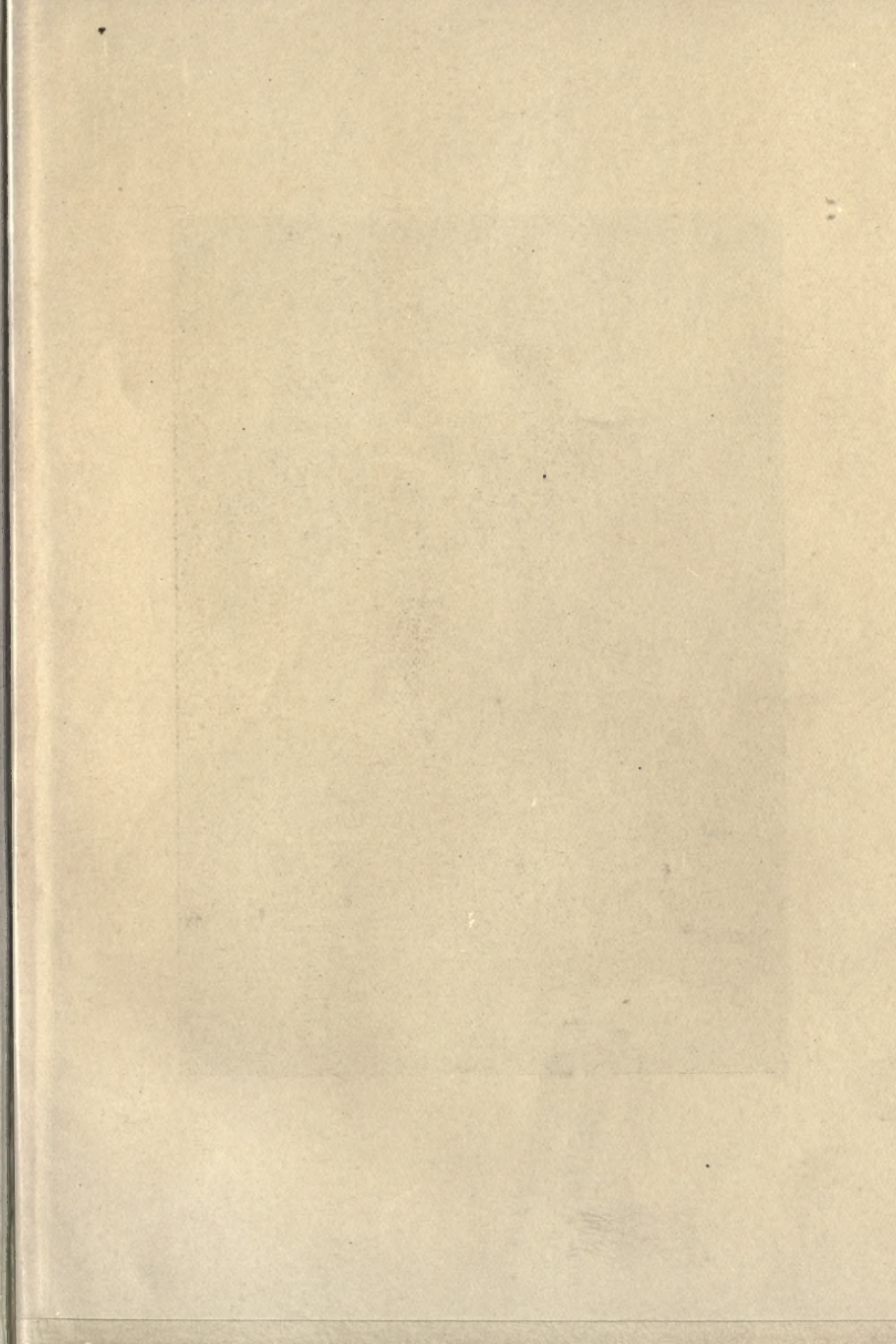
ESSAYS
JOHN TODHUNTER

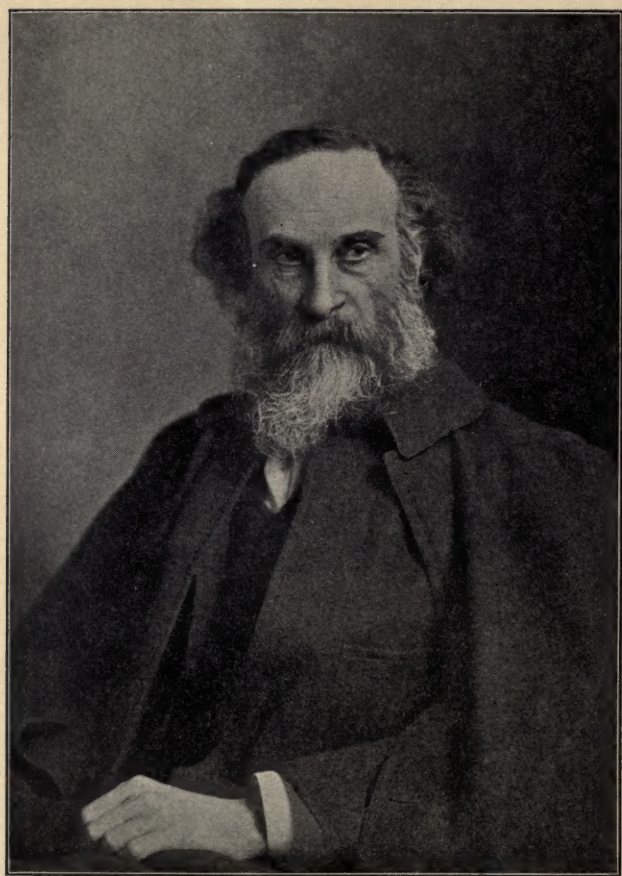




ESSAYS





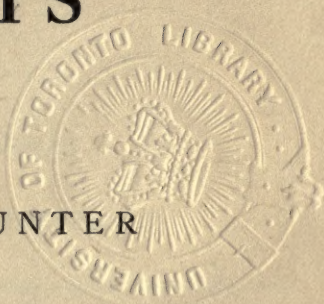


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ESSAYS

BY THE LATE
JOHN TODHUNTER

WITH A FOREWORD
BY
STANDISH O'GRADY



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FOREWORD

JOHN TODHUNTER

*Born in Dublin, 30th December 1839. Died in Bedford Park, Chiswick,
25th October 1916*

I WAS an undergraduate in the university of Dublin when Todhunter suddenly appeared amongst us in the debates of the Philosophical Society and at once stepped to the foremost position as the representative of literature, art and culture in general. He was a little older than the rest of us and made us wholesomely feel what we actually were, little more than emancipated schoolboys groping our way about in the world of mind. Then, too, he looked what he was, an unmistakable representative of culture and intellectual refinement. To this period belongs the strikingly original essay on Beauty. Reading this, I could hardly dispossess myself of the feeling that Beauty had been defined, its place in the world of things finally settled, which of course, was an illusion, that subject being the most inexhaustible of all. Nevertheless it is an admirable bit of philosophy and will bear many perusals. Then it is pure philosophy, hardly touched, as are the other essays, by the writer's very interesting and lovable personality.

Later, when I became better acquainted with him, I almost forgot his culture and learning in the

enjoyment of his good humour and good-nature and never-failing spirit of cheerful camaraderie. Indeed, he was the most welcome of companions ; not one sour drop in his blood. He was a little odd and unconventional, saying and doing the most unexpected things, but always humorously. I was once in a drawing-room presided over by a young, pretty and sprightly hostess. Todhunter took up a book and proceeded to read deliberately. "What are you reading, Mr Todhunter?" said the hostess, a little rebukefully.

"Words, words, good words." Then, looking up suddenly, he added: "And lead us not into temptation."

Indeed, his conversation was more charged with wit and humour than with philosophy, literature and art, and so I read these essays on the look out for this quality of the man. Nor was I disappointed. The "Essay in Search of a Subject" and the "Essay upon Essays" are delightful examples of a rare and odd kind of humour quite as good. I think, as Lamb's but springing out of a wider culture and a saner and more balanced mind. The reader of these essays will find that he has been kept smiling through the whole perusal.

He was my guest once at a country place which I held temporarily in the County Wicklow. He and I and two or three other men spent the day mountaineering. One of these men was Mr T. W. Rolleston, now a well-known figure in the literary and intellectual world of London. In the evening Todhunter read out for us his poem, *The Sons of Tuirenn*. As he concluded each canto he would lay down the MS.

and look round and say solemnly : " Here endeth the first lesson," " Here endeth the second lesson." Not much in this, truly, but it was so like him.

Next morning I invited him into the garden to see a chaffinch's nest and the eggs in it. That garden was in a shameful state of decay, neglected for years. Todhunter stood and looked all around with manifest pleasure and appreciation, at the overgrown walks, the gooseberry bushes suffocated by tangled vegetation, the rotted moss-grown sundial, and kept murmuring : " Delightful, how delightful." I thought this but a momentary ebullition of a momentary odd mood. But I find here one essay, " A Riverside Walk, an Easy-Going Essay by a Peripatetic Philosopher," in which he avows and even justifies philosophically his delight in the decay and crumbling down of what was once beautiful or grand. The feeling is perhaps not so uncommon. The poets have, I think, celebrated autumn and the fall of the leaf as much as they have the freshness and gaiety of springtime : Shelley wrote more stanzas upon the desolation of the garden of " the Sensitive Plant " than he did upon its bloom and beauty.

When Todhunter liked anyone he liked him through and through ; would not admit or even see any fault or failing. If one whom he liked took to walking on his hands I think he would have boldly declared it to be an excellent mode of progression. I was once the guest of the evening at a public dinner in London, where I delivered a wretchedly bad speech. Afterwards I was diverted though not solaced by hearing Todhunter valiantly declaring to a group of

English friends that for an Irishman to make a bad speech was a brilliant and meritorious thing, and reflected the greatest credit on the bad speaker. Nor must it be imagined that he was all good nature and humorous tolerance. He could be severe enough at times, but never savagely so. I was once praising a common friend of ours as inspired by very high ideals. "Yes," said Todhunter, "he is indeed a noble fellow; a noble fellow." Pause. "And he knows it." Saying which he stroked his beard a couple of times, a habitual gesture with him whenever he said a good thing. His friends will remember this habit.

He was happy in his birth and upbringing, for he came from an old respected Dublin Quaker family, deriving there as birthright simplicity and sincerity, plain honesty in word and deed, and a habit of benevolence and good will to all men. Then, too, in my time there was an atmosphere of culture and intellectual refinement in all the leading families of that sect. His father was a dear old gentleman, clean-shaven, with strictly defined features as of an ancient coin, as lively as a cricket, merry, loquacious and delighting in the exposition of Quaker principles to those who were outside the fold. "Now, tell me, Mr O'Grady," he would begin, preparing for an onslaught on the extreme penalty, "tell me what is the effect of capital punishment?" "Death," Mr Todhunter," I would reply. This quip or whatever it may be called on my part so delighted him that he would lead up to it and expect it, taking a good pinch of snuff in honour of the joke and proceeding joyfully with his denunciation. He had, too, a lot

of radical ideas, derived, I suppose, from Bentham, who had held the field in his young days. On such topics he was so vehement and irrepressible that I have sometimes seen his whole family surround him, trying to pacify and keep him down. He knew Elizabeth Fry, who, he said, was a most stately and majestic old lady; had come upon Tommy Moore counting avidly "a lot of dirty bank-notes" when in the height of his glory, and was shocked at the sight; and used to say that the finest thing to be seen in Dublin in his young days was the great Dan O'Connell, with his jolly face and huge figure striding triumphantly down to the Four Courts on a fine morning.

Old Mr Todhunter's Radicalism reminds me that, so far as I know, John Todhunter had no politics at all. I once asked him whether he was in favour of Home Rule. "I'm in favour, O'Grady," he replied, "of anything that is for the good of the country."

Old Mr Todhunter's dinners invariably concluded with the brewing of punch, a domestic solemnity elaborately conducted, with a costly service and as if after a certain ritual, the host himself distributing one wineglassful of the cheerful liquid to each of the ladies present. From his London friends I learn that John Todhunter duly observed the same solemnity, the stately brewing of after-dinner punch, at least on festive occasions.

These Essays, the prose remains of John Todhunter, will be, in my opinion, a valuable addition to any library, and will be read and reread lovingly and with delight, for they are in the main true essays,

like Lamb's and Hazlitt's, racy of the soil where they grew, of the pleasant, sincere and humorous personality in which they originated, and I am indeed proud and glad to be able to write even this poor tribute to his excellence both as a man and a writer.

STANDISH O'GRADY.

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*The following Lecture was one of a course
of "Saturday Lectures," in connection with
Alexandra College, delivered in the Museum
Building, Trinity College, Dublin.*

ESSAYS

THEORY OF THE BEAUTIFUL

I N coming forward to deliver a popular lecture upon the "Theory of the Beautiful"—one of the deepest questions in metaphysics—a question which has engaged so many of the greatest thinkers in all ages, I feel that I have undertaken no slight task. I shall not attempt to give you any detailed account of the various theories which have been held respecting the nature of the Beautiful. I shall merely say, with Ruskin, that these theories are for the most part, so far as I have studied them, unsatisfactory. Metaphysicians of the Common-sense school, such as Dugald Stewart, or of what we may call the Physiological school, such as Mr Bain, give us little help in our inquiry into the nature of the Beautiful, for the simple reason that their perceptions of beauty are very imperfect. They speak to us of the Beautiful, much as a man without an ear for music might speak of a symphony of Beethoven, or a man almost totally colour-blind of a picture of Turner.

The Æsthetic of Kant, admirable and logically complete as it is, is too purely intellectual to be at all satisfactory. He gives us, as it were, a skeleton of the Beautiful; but the life of beauty is not to be

seized by these hard definitions of his. This he himself fully recognises when he calls the judgment of the Beautiful a judgment of *taste*, and declares that it is not a judgment of knowledge and logical, but an æsthetic judgment. This unseizableness of ideas of beauty by the pure reason is also expressed in his first definition. "The Beautiful is that which pleases universally *without concept*." Beauty is in fact not merely a thing of the pure reason, any more than it is merely a thing of the senses or of common-sense. Kant's observations on the relations between the Beautiful and the Sublime are, however, most interesting, and show that he had at least grasped these relations in his own intellectual fashion, imperfectly as he may have possessed the æsthetic faculty.

It is only in the systems of the Transcendental Idealists—Schelling and Hegel—that we find any theory of the Beautiful at once profound and systematic; and it is most remarkable how great is the resemblance between their ideas and those of one of the most ancient writers on the subject, Plato, who may himself be regarded as a Transcendental Idealist.

Plato's philosophy is eminently an æsthetic one; the idea of the Beautiful underlies all the particular questions discussed in his dialogues. His view of human life closely resembles that expressed in Wordsworth's great ode:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.

The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar:

Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

Our perceptions of beauty, according to Plato, are reminiscences of the Divine Beauty which we saw face to face before birth. By means of philosophy we may, even in this life, rise from the concrete, through the abstract, to the absolute, conceived of as a living being. This is the Beautiful—the Being of beings. To know Him we must be elevated on the wings of love, above all finite things of beauty, individual or general. Sometimes he thus makes love precede knowledge. At other times he asserts that to feel the Beautiful we must first know it. When we know it, love is kindled in our hearts. The lover becomes like the thing he loves. If then we love the highest Beauty—God—we become like Him. Our love of the Beautiful goes astray by seizing the body instead of the soul—substituting sensual joys for spiritual. Perhaps the most complete statement of Plato's philosophy would be that the Beautiful is God Himself, conceived of by the reason in the pure enthusiasm of love, the two elements of the cognition—knowing and feeling—being regarded as necessary to each other and simultaneous. It is interesting to find somewhat similar ideas expressed by several modern authors : by Ruskin in his theory of beauty, in the second volume of *Modern Painters* ; by Keats in *Endymion* ; and by Fichte in his *Way towards the Blessed Life*. With regard to the finite things which we call beautiful, Plato asserts that they are transitory—now they exist, now they pass away.

They live between absolute beauty and absolute ugliness. This reminds us of Hegel's theory of existence, which is, according to him, a kind of vibration between being and non-being. Plato's definition of the Beautiful is that it consists in harmony.

From the German Transcendentalists we get—what Plato does not give us—a systematic theory of the Beautiful; but it is too abstruse, too much connected with their metaphysical systems, and couched in too purely technical language, to be perfectly intelligible without immense study. He would be a bold man who should profess that he understood Hegel, and *I* certainly shall not presume to become the exponent of his system.

I shall, then, content myself in this lecture with the endeavour to give a good practical definition of a few words which we are constantly making use of in a vague way—the *Beautiful*, the *Sublime*, the *Pretty*, the *Grotesque*, with perhaps a few others. I shall, as clearly as I can, explain to you what I myself understand by these words, and I shall appeal to your own æsthetic consciences in confirmation of the justness of these definitions. The scope of this lecture will not admit of any very subtle analysis of the elements of the idea of the Beautiful. We must pass by many questions of the deepest interest without studying all their ramifications. We must find our way to a great extent by instinct rather than ratiocination.

I shall make Jouffroy's *Cours d'Esthétique* a sort of guide-book to the country over which we have to travel. Jouffroy's views may not be the profoundest

possible, and his conclusions may occasionally be unwarranted by the premises ; but his method is admirable. He is the most patient of investigators. He tracks the idea of the Beautiful through all the psychological labyrinths which surround it, with the untiring keenness of an Indian on the trail of a deer. He starts from common-sense, but he does not end there. He rises from mechanics to metaphysics. He begins as a Positivist, and ends as a Transcendental Idealist.

And now, with Jouffroy as our flying-master, let us learn to use the wings of our souls—not, let us hope, artificial waxen ones, but those divinely fashioned wings of Love, of which Plato speaks. We must not be too ambitious at first. We shall begin by hopping a little along the ground ; then, as our wings grow stronger, we may venture to flit from tree to tree, until at last, from some now distant mountain-top, we may launch boldly into the spaces of the ether itself.

Each of us who has arrived at years of discretion is generally, at least when awake, conscious of two things : his own personal existence, and the existence of something outside himself—that is, of what metaphysicians call the *ego* and the *non-ego*. How we arrive at this consciousness we need not now discuss. Tennyson's lines, in *In Memoriam*, give a sufficiently distinct account of the matter :

The baby, new to earth and sky,
What time his tender palm is prest,
Against the circle of the breast,
Has never thought that this is I :

But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of "I" and "me,"
And finds "I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch."

So rounds he to a separate mind,
From whence clear memory may begin,
As through the frame which binds him in
His isolation grows defined.

But further, we are conscious that this external world is perpetually influencing us: we only know of its existence, and indeed of our own, by the effects which it produces upon us. Hence metaphysicians denominate the *ego*—that is, our own mind—the *subject*, the thing influenced, and the external world the *object*, the thing which influences. We are, however, not merely passive; we in our turn influence the external world, to which we thus may be said to become objects. We are at once passive and active, recipients of influence and sources of influence.

Now the external world manifests itself to us through the senses—as colour to the eyes, as sound to the ears, as heat, cold, etc., to the skin, as sweetness or bitterness to the palate, as fragrance to the nose, as form to sight and touch. All these sense impressions we call *phenomena*, *appearances*, because they suggest something underlying them and causing them, which we call *substance*.

This external world, of which we are conscious, is by no means a simple thing. It is made up of an immense number of things, which are more or less separate from one another, and of different shapes, sizes, colours; which things we call *bodies*, and which

are further separable into various elements or substances, which affect us in very different ways—have, as we term it, different *properties* or *qualities*. Here then we have, as it were, other individualities besides our own, even in what we call the inorganic world ; to say nothing of the myriads of organisms, culminating in man, with which we constantly come in contact. If they act on us in a certain manner, we can react upon them ; nay, we find that they act and react on one another. We finally come to regard all substances as analysable into two elements, the one active, the other passive, which we call *force* and *matter*. We look upon all substances as ultimately composed of atoms of matter, aggregated in a particular manner by the action of various forces. And the strange thing is, that we only know of the existence of force by its action upon matter, and matter through its arrangement and agitation by force. Upon the molecular arrangement of a substance its qualities are supposed to depend ; while heat, light, sound, etc., are now regarded as modes of motion ; that is to say, are due to the agitation of the molecules of the conducting medium by some force generated, or, more correctly speaking, focused—and frequently altered in various ways—in the hot, luminous, or sonorous body. Some philosophers look upon matter and force as mere conditions of substance—substance in a state of passivity or activity. Here we reach the limits of physics ; and when we perceive the analogy between *matter* and *force* in mechanics, and *subject* and *object* in psychology, we are on the threshold of transcendental metaphysics. When we regard *mind* and *substance*

as not merely analogous, but identical, we become full-fledged Transcendentalists; the universe is no longer the domain of blind force and dead matter, but the domain of living intelligence and never-ceasing design.

But besides these notions respecting this mysterious external world, we pass judgment upon it. It sometimes pleases, sometimes displeases us. We call some things agreeable, some disagreeable; some good, some bad; some beautiful, some ugly; while some are indifferent to us, we don't know what to call them.

Our present object is to ascertain what we mean by calling things beautiful, or, in more precise language, What is the Beautiful?

The first question that presents itself in this inquiry is, whether the Beautiful is absolute or relative. Does every eye make its own beauty, or is there a beauty which everyone recognises as such? Is there any canon by which we can determine whether our judgment respecting the beauty of any given object be correct or incorrect? It is difficult to give any satisfactory answer to these questions without discussing the whole subject of the Beautiful. For the present we may admit that opinions differ with regard to particular objects; that to some extent each man has his own canons of taste, and that there is no recognised infallible authority to which we can refer for guidance. *Æsthetic* judgments are in many respects similar to ethical judgments; they are modified by temperament, education, etc. But even in ethical judgments we find an approach to unanimity—a coincidence in

the main features of all ethical systems, however much the practical details may differ; and in æsthetic judgments there is perhaps even greater approach to unanimity. And further than this, the æsthetic conscience may be awakened and convicted of sin, just as the ethical conscience may. Finally, the more truly æsthetically cultivated men are, the more unanimous do their judgments become. It would seem, therefore, that the variability in our æsthetic judgments depends rather upon some defect in our own nature than on any variability in the nature of the Beautiful. Truth is truth, right right, and beauty beauty, however men may err respecting them; and this is the case even if we grant that we have no infallible standard by which to measure the truth, rightness or beauty of any particular fact, action, or thing.

As an illustration of the possibility of awaking the æsthetic conscience, and of the accuracy of its judgments when once awakened, I may relate an "experience" of my own. Some time previous to the Franco-German war, I had occasion to pass through Strasbourg; and remained there a day, for the purpose of seeing the Cathedral. On my arrival, after the manner of travellers, I put up at a hotel, glad to "take mine ease at mine inn," after a tiresome railway journey. It so happened that there was an early *table d'hôte*, which left time for a leisurely post-prandial stroll through the city; and at the *table d'hôte* I made the acquaintance of a Scotchman, who was engaged in putting up some gas-works, and who had been domiciled in Strasbourg for some weeks. On my explaining that my time was limited, he kindly

volunteered to act as my guide over the city and show me the "lions." Accordingly we visited the Cathedral, and for the sake of conversation I began to improve the occasion, by descanting upon the architecture, carvings, pictures, etc. It is always delightful to parade one's small knowledge before anyone who happens to have still less—which was the case with my Scotch friend, who was as totally deficient in what is called "æsthetic culture" as he was in humbug.

From the Cathedral we went to the Picture Gallery, a queer miscellaneous collection of a few gems amid a great deal of rubbish. Among other things there were some plaster casts of a number of Greek statues, which I was passing by as old friends, but which arrested the Scotchman's attention. "Eh!" he exclaimed, as if a new light had burst upon him, "them's vera pretty." Then, after a contemplative pause, "Now who made them things?" I explained that they were Greek. "D'ye mean to tell me that the old Greeks made them things?" "Yes," said I. Another pause of contemplation; then, in a tentative tone: "Well now it sthrikes me that them's as good as anything that's been made since." In this opinion I quite concurred, and then asked him which he liked best. After a short study of the statues, among which was the Venus de Medici, and, I think, the Apollo Belvedere, he singled out one and said decidedly: "That's the prettiest—that's the prettiest." The statue which he selected was the Venus of Melos, one of the few statues of the best or Phidian period of Greek art which we possess. This, I think, goes far to prove that there is a certain

catholicity in our ideas of beauty ; and that an honest, unsophisticated mind can to some extent appreciate the Beautiful, when fairly confronted with it, and at leisure to contemplate it.

Let us proceed then to seek an answer to the question, What is the Beautiful ?

There are two sides to this question. First, the facts ; and secondly, their explanation. Now there are two elements in every perception of beauty, a cause and an effect—an external object and an internal phenomenon. The facts which we have to ascertain are, therefore, *first*, the characters of the beautiful object ; and *secondly*, the phenomena produced in us by these. Then we must proceed to the explanation of these phenomena.

First, then, for the characters of the beautiful object. What objects produce in us the emotion of the Beautiful ? And here we are assailed by a number of heterogenous things to which we apply the same word, beautiful : a beautiful face, a sunset, a poem, a piece of music, a picture, a statue, natural scenery. How are we to set about finding what is common to all these ? It seems a hopeless task to endeavour to reduce them to categories. Let us, however, make the attempt. In the statue we have *form* ; in the face, the sunset, the picture, the natural landscape, *form* and *colour* ; in the poem and the piece of music, *rhythm* and *sound*. Here, at first sight, we have three classes of beautiful objects, reducible to two, for the statue has, on closer examination, colour delicately relieving its form. We accordingly proceed to make two categories of the Beautiful : 1. The Beautiful of *form* and *colour*.

2. The Beautiful of *rhythm* and *sound*. But this is not quite satisfactory, and we begin to ask ourselves: Can we abstract form from colour, and rhythm from sound, and will there then be a beauty of each of these?

Is there a beauty of pure form? It would seem that there is. Certain designs drawn on a white ground with black ink are beautiful. Is there a Beautiful of pure colour? It is harder to abstract colour from form, but still we *can* get a peep of blue sky, and consider it as mere colour, and it is beautiful. Is there a Beautiful of pure rhythm? Here we are a little puzzled. What is rhythm? We may define it as division of *time*, as form is of *space*. Now divisions of time are perceptible in many ways without sound. A deaf man could see a pendulum or a conductor's baton beating time. Would the mere perception of rhythm be beautiful to him? It is hard to answer this. But suppose the time were marked by the rhythmical motions of dancers? Here we may undoubtedly get an idea of beauty. But in all movements in space which measure time, we have something very like form, if not form itself. And in the very idea of movements in space measuring time, we find form and rhythm very closely related to one another. Let us pass by this significant fact for the present, and ask lastly, Is there a Beautiful of sound without rhythm? We have the same difficulty here that we had with pure colour. There we had extension over space suggesting form; here we have duration in time suggesting rhythm. However, by an effort, we bring ourselves to think of the sound as lasting for ever. Is there, then, a beauty of

pure sound? It appears that there is. The rich-toned note of a master delights us—the meagre, uncertain tone of a beginner disgusts us. But even in the note itself, let it last as long as it may, is there not a certain rhythm dimly felt? Science assures us that what our ear feels dimly, undeniably exists; and that there is, moreover, a *form* inseparable from sound, which reveals itself in what we call *timbre*. Is there a form inseparable from colour? Science assures us that there is, and a *rhythm* also which reveals itself in *hue*. We have already spoken of form and rhythm dividing space and time, but they do more—they measure space and time. Now all our ideas of measurement are finally reducible to ideas of number—the most abstract ideas of which our minds are capable. Here, therefore, we find the Beautiful connected in some way with numbers. In *some* way, yes; but *what* way? We have shot past the mark in our passion for abstraction. Let us try back a little. Form and rhythm—what are they, which seem to be so intimately connected with beauty on the one hand, and with numbers on the other? We cannot help thinking that they have something to do with our old friends, matter and force. Form seems to express molecular rest—to be a statical idea, and rhythm to express molecular motion—to be a dynamical idea. Or, in brief, *rhythm* expresses *force*, and *form*, *limitation of force*.

Now it is obvious that all ideas of form and rhythm are not ideas of beauty. All forms and rhythms are not beautiful; the irregular scribbling of a child, the irregular noises in the street, are not beautiful. Certain forms and certain rhythms only are beautiful.

A Greek statue and a sonata of Beethoven, we pronounce beautiful. What additional facts can we discover with regard to the form of the one and the rhythm of the other? We talk of the *symmetry* of the one, the *harmony* of the other—what do we mean by these terms?

Both the statue and the piece of music are made up of a number of parts, and the magnitudes of the parts, as related to one another and to the whole, are what we term the proportions. Now in both sculpture and music these are measurable, and are reducible to simple numerical ratios—in sculpture of space, or formal; in music of time, or rhythmical—which correspond in both arts in a very remarkable manner. There is apparently an arithmetical basis common to the two arts. Mr Hay has ascertained that the outline of a typical human figure is approximately made up of a series of curves, which form portions of ellipses, of which the *axes* are inclined to the mesial perpendicular at angles which bear the same proportions to an angle, which he calls the *dominant angle* of the figure, as the notes of the musical scale bear to the key-note. Every human figure is, in fact, built in a certain key. If its curves be not true—if it be out of tune—we think it ugly. Further than this, Mr Hay has discovered that a similar law of angular proportion holds good with respect to buildings, and to vases, urns, etc.

Time will not permit me to go at any great length into the theory of music. It is sufficient to say that every musical note differs from what we call a noise; *first*, in being produced by the *regular* vibrations of a sonorous body. In every second during which the

sound continues, there must be a certain definite number of similar vibrations, and upon the number per second of these its *pitch* depends. If we count the number of vibrations per second which give rise to any note of the scale, and then count those which give rise to its octaves above and below, we find, that the octave above is produced by double the number of vibrations, the octave below by one-half the number. But *secondly*, every musical note is a complex sound—the principal sound is accompanied by other fainter sounds called *harmonics*, which give it its richness and fulness. A mere noise has no regular rhythm, is broken up into a number of irregular explosions of sound, and has no distinct harmonics. Musical notes are, in fact, harmonious in both rhythm and sound ; noises are discordant in both. Music consists in complexities of sound in which the parts bear certain definite ratios to each other and to the whole ; noise consists in complexities of sound in which the parts bear no definite ratios to each other. Music is harmony to the ear and to the mind ; noise, a chaos of unintelligible din. It is quite impossible for me to give any theory of the musical scale. I can only say that it does not consist of arbitrarily chosen sounds, for which no reason can be adduced. It has an arithmetical propriety, which may be briefly explained by saying that the notes of the scale bear simple ratios to one another—ratios which are easily intelligible, such as 1 to 2, 2 to 3, etc. We can easily grasp the idea of *one-half*, or *two-thirds*—our mind's eye instantly presents to us the notion of something cut into two or three equal parts, and we can easily fix our attention upon

one or two of these and exclude the remainder. But when we come to such a fraction as *eighty-four ninety-ninths*, the mind's eye becomes dazzled—we find a difficulty in at once dividing the thing imagined into ninety-nine equal parts, and fixing our attention upon eighty-four of them.

Melody may be defined as the orderly succession of musical notes. It must have a well-defined rhythm, and it must be composed of notes belonging to some key, and therefore having definite ratios to each other ; or, if it goes out of this key, it must proceed, by a regular process of modulation, into some other key. It may be said to correspond to the order or succession of parts in a statue, as harmony corresponds to their proportion. Scientifically melody and harmony, distinct as are their æsthetic properties, are much the same thing ; melody depending on relations of succession, harmony on simultaneous relations.

It is interesting further to observe that there is a scale of seven colours—the seven prismatic colours into which solar light is resolvable—which has certain remarkable analogies to the sound scale. It has been found, in fact, that the colour scale is analogous to a sound scale of which the vibrations are immensely more rapid. Here, then, we have the hint of an arithmetical basis for the colour arts, similar to that for the arts of form and of sound.

But, besides these numerical ratios of the parts to each other and to the whole, there is another relation between them—a relation not merely of magnitude, but of arrangement. The magnitudes of the parts may remain the same, and yet, by

altering their arrangement, the whole may become beautiful or ugly. A certain order of parts, a certain symmetrical arrangement of the parts, by which each is made a step towards the completeness of the whole, is necessary to beauty.

From these considerations we may infer that a certain relation of parts to the whole, and of interdependence of parts, is closely connected with our ideas of beauty ; that, in fact, *order* and *proportion* are, if not the Beautiful, as Aristotle declares, at least conditions of the Beautiful. But there is a kind of order and proportion in all things. What kind of order and proportion is beautiful ? To this we may for the present answer, that kind of order which we call *symmetry*, and that kind of proportion which we call *harmony* ; and by *symmetry* we understand that interdependence of parts by which each is made the necessary condition of the perfection of the whole ; and by *harmony* we mean, so far as we at present understand the term, that interdependence of parts of different magnitudes which is most intelligible and most satisfying to the mind.

But what do we mean by the *perfection* of the whole ? At bottom, our judgment of the perfection of anything depends on its satisfying all the demands which we make upon it. And what do we mean by what is most satisfying to the mind ? At bottom, our judgment of satisfaction depends upon our perception that the object judged of fulfils all its proper functions in the universe. So that we find these two ideas of symmetry and harmony have something in common, which we shall still call *harmony*, using the word in a more extended sense than we have hitherto

done, and defining it for the present as that order and proportion of parts in anything, which correspond to the order and proportion of the universe, and thus enable the thing to fulfil all its functions in creation. So far as we have yet gone, beauty seems to depend on this harmony. We all vaguely understand what it is, and we must rest content with this vagueness for the present.

Let us now turn back for a moment to our list of beautiful things. We have seen how form and colour, and rhythm and sound, are all finally connected with numbers. Are there any elements in our beautiful things *not* reducible to ideas of form and rhythm? A poem, for instance. The poem corresponds in many respects to a piece of music—the feet are like bars, the lines like phrases. It has rhythm and cadence. The words, however, are different from musical notes. We can find no scale of seven notes, unless the vowel sounds approximate to this in an imperfect manner. But what is most important is, that words have a definite meaning; they belong to some language; they *express* something—the thoughts of men like ourselves. This opens up a new field of inquiry. We begin to ask: Do the other things express anything; do they too speak a language? The piece of music is very like a poem. It certainly does express something; it speaks a language, very intelligible if not exactly reducible to words. The statue, also, expresses something; the beautiful face, a good deal. They all bring us, directly or indirectly, into contact with other minds besides our own. The human mind expresses itself in various languages, not by words alone, but by

gestures, facial expression, bodily form, and in art. But the sunset and the landscape do not express the human mind ; and besides, we decided that there was a certain beauty in pure form, pure colour, etc. Is there, then, anything behind these which expresses itself through them ? What is the meaning of these strange hieroglyphics ? They express something which we have talked about as matter and force, which we saw were analogous to the subjective and objective sides of our own minds ; and numbers themselves express the effort of the human mind to comprehend the universe—to fathom the unfathomable. What if the Beautiful itself be the expression of something behind this material world—some character of that Invisible of which the visible is the revelation ?

Before going deeper into the question of expression, let us see what we have gained by our imperfect analysis of the characters of these beautiful objects. We have discovered certain characters common to all these objects apparently dissimilar. We have found that their beauty is in some way connected with a certain order and proportion of parts which we have called harmony. We have ascertained that some express the human mind, and that all express the play of matter and force if nothing else. We cannot get much further than this without considering the second part of the question with which we started—viz. What are the phenomena produced in us by the beautiful object ? These may be summed up in the one word, "*joy*." "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." We must, therefore, proceed to ask ourselves what we mean when we speak of joy—what are the conditions of

this feeling, and how the beautiful object fulfils these conditions.

If asked suddenly for a definition of this word, *joy*, we might say simply, that it is a mode of pleasure; but we must ascertain what kind of pleasure we mean, and whether the emotion of the beautiful is simply joy and nothing more—whether the two terms are co-extensive in meaning.

All our emotions may, for practical purposes, be reduced to two classes—pleasurable and painful. The first thing, then, that we have to ask is whether everything that causes us pleasure is beautiful. We have not to think very deeply to reply that it is not. We are susceptible to two kinds of pleasure—interested and disinterested. For the maintenance of our particular life, we stand in need of a number of things: food, clothing, etc.—all those things which we call useful. All unsatisfied wants cause us pain, and the supply of our wants causes us pleasure; but things that cause us pleasure in this way we do not regard as beautiful. It is true that the same thing may be useful and beautiful (employing the word useful in the restricted sense of ministering to our definite personal needs), but not on the same grounds. If the Useful and the Beautiful were the same, they would always co-exist in the same object, and increase and diminish *pari passu*. When an object ceased to be useful, it would cease to be beautiful, and a judgment of utility would precede that of beauty—all of which are manifest absurdities.

But besides our interested pleasures, we have others which are disinterested, which for the present we may call pleasures of sympathy. Besides the

demands which we make upon the external world, it is constantly making demands upon us ; and sometimes we resist these demands, sometimes we yield with reluctance, sometimes with delight. The demand for sympathy is constantly being made upon us ; sometimes voluntarily by those who need it, sometimes involuntarily by those who may be unconscious that they are appealing to us. In fact all emotion in others finds a reflex in us ; sometimes causing us pain, sometimes pleasure. The sympathetic pleasure which we experience in the happiness of others, is a pleasure of a different kind from that which we experience in the supplying of our own wants. We may even have a pleasure in suffering for the sake of others, which far transcends any selfish gratification. In our interested pleasures we remain wrapped up in ourselves ; in our disinterested pleasures we go out of ourselves. There is a joy of boundless self-abandonment. It is like an escape from prison. We are none the worse for this self-abandonment ; we attain a higher life by this laying down of our lives.

Now the emotion of the Beautiful has in it something of the sympathetic character ; but it rather resembles our sympathetic delight in the happiness of others, than our pleasure in doing good to others. It is contemplative rather than active. There is, moreover, as Ruskin says, an element of worship in it, and under the delight there is an element of melancholy.

Even in the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy hath her sovran shrine.

We absorb things useful into our own personality. We yearn to be absorbed into things beautiful.

Whence come this joy, this worship, this melancholy? How are they connected with ideas of order and proportion, or harmony? Let us look a little more closely into these sympathetic emotions.

The most obvious conditions of sympathy are, that the thing sympathised with must be sufficiently similar to ourselves to be intelligible to us, and yet absolutely distinct from ourselves. We can only sympathise with ourselves when regarded from an external standpoint—as in a mirror; with an inanimate object, when we imagine it endowed with life.

It may be said in general terms that the more *life* there is in anything, the more we sympathise with it; and the nearer it approaches a condition of lifelessness, the less we sympathise with it. We sympathise more with an inanimate body—a stone, for instance—when in motion, than when at rest; more with a plant than with a stone; more with an animal than with a plant; more with a man than with an animal; and, as Jouffroy says, more with a man of genius than with an ordinary man. Still, this is speaking merely in general terms. It would be truer to say that the more life there is in anything, the more it is capable of exciting in us sympathy or antipathy, which is a kind of inverted sympathy. We sympathise most, not with what has most life, but what is most like ourselves. In particular moods we sympathise with similar moods in others. We rejoice with them that do rejoice,

and weep with them that weep. When anger in another excites anger in us, even this is a species of sympathetic emotion. But we may be in opposite moods to those of others, and then we are in an antipathetic condition—we either cannot, or will not, enter into their feelings. And there are some persons to whom we stand in a constant relation of antipathy. Sympathy tends to make us love people, and antipathy to make us hate them. Love and hatred are not quite the same as sympathy and antipathy; and the differentiation of these terms will show that the emotion of the Beautiful is an emotion of love rather than of mere sympathy.

Sympathy may be defined as fellow-feeling—the sense of identity of nature. Love is the yearning towards something of a different nature from ourselves. Sympathy unites similar, love dissimilar personalities, which yet supplement each other. Sympathy unites men with men, and women with women; but love unites the sexes. Yet sympathy is necessary to the existence of love, and is born of love. Sympathy implies understanding of another person's feelings and sharing them. Love implies this and something more. It is, as it were, sympathy with what is not perfectly intelligible. Sympathy is a more definite thing; through sympathy we feel again something that we have already experienced; it carries us but a short way outside ourselves. But love carries us into the regions of the unknown, makes us feel things transcending experience, develops in us new capacities for sympathy, changes our nature. Sympathy is like

perfect concord in music ; but love is like music itself, of which the essence is the perpetual resolution of discord.

And now we may add something to our account of the emotion of the Beautiful. It is not a mere pleasure of sympathy. It is a rapture of love—of a love like that of Endymion for his goddess, of a mortal for an immortal who perpetually melts from his embrace. This is the secret of the joy, the worship, the melancholy.

We have thus arrived at something like an answer to the questions : What are the characters of the Beautiful object ? and what is the emotion produced by it ? We have called the one harmony and the other love. We have, in fact, arrived at something like the æsthetic of Plato ; but as yet we understand these terms but vaguely, and we have still to discover why harmony should produce love in us.

So far we have been working in a kind of analytic fashion. We must now work synthetically. So far we have been toilsomely climbing with our eyes fixed upon the rough ground, from which we have scarcely ventured to look up. Now we must begin to use our wings boldly, and to look with all the eyes of our imaginations a thousand ways at once. So far we have been groping after the facts of the case, and as yet we scarcely know whether we have arrived at them or not. Now we must ask ourselves : What do these facts mean ?

What is this harmony which speaks to us through forms, colours, sounds, and what does it say to us ? Let us take a simple example. We hear a violin solo

played by the hand of a master—and it delights us. How or why? First, there is in it something that we recognise not merely as pleasant to our senses, though it sets our ears tingling with pleasure; or interesting to our intellect, though it leads us easily on, through labyrinths of thought; or delightful to our emotional nature, though it sets this pulsating delightfully — something that we instinctively recognise as good and right in and for itself. It woos us to listen, it fixes our attention, it absorbs us, as no mere noise could. It starts from out the Babel which surrounds us and jars upon us, like a revelation of a more perfect order of things. We feel that this is no product of blind forces struggling together in self-annihilating disorder, but of forces working intelligently, and with mutual helpfulness, towards a definite end. We sympathise with it, moreover, as a revelation of human emotion; not merely the emotion of the player, he but interprets for us that of the composer; not merely of the emotion of the composer, he but interprets for us that of our common humanity—what we have felt but could not utter, and more than this, he utters for us. And finally we are rapt beyond the regions of sympathy, into the regions of love; beyond ourselves, beyond humanity, into the divine—the mystery of mysteries, the problem of all our questionings, the goal of all our aspirations. This Beauty, which gleams on us out of the endless play of forms, colours, sounds; this Harmony which hides itself in numbers, is but the veil upon the face of God, through which His glory shines; nay, it is the very Shekinah itself. Its soul is that awful Spirit of the

Earth who appeared to Faust, vanishing with the words :

At the whizzing loom of Time I ply,
And weave the garment of God that thou seest Him by.

But every harmony is a double revelation. If it reveals a more perfect order of things by its own perfection, it no less reveals a less perfect order of things outside itself. If it reveals a Kosmos, it no less reveals a Chaos ; and in these two words, Kosmos and Chaos, we have got to the root of the matter. Every particular harmony is for us an association of ideas, and sets vibrating harmonically our imagination, which works through endless associations of ideas. We rise from analogy to analogy, from harmony to harmony, until we arrive at the harmony of harmonies—the Kosmical Order of things, the order which tends to the production of more, and infinitely more life—life of a higher perfection of organisation, life which tends to produce creatures endowed with more and more magnificent powers—greater and greater capacities for happiness—eternal life. The Beautiful is the revelation of the Divine purpose in creation ; the Divine Word which is perpetually being made flesh. The Ugly is the revelation of the Chaotic Disorder of things, the disorder which tends to the pollution of all purity, the decay of all loveliness, the production of lower and lower types of life—eternal death. It is the revelation of the Kingdom of darkness and Satan.

The mystery of harmony is that its perfection consists in its being imperfect. It proceeds by the endless resolution of discord. There is always a

remnant of discord to be resolved, and this very discord suggests higher harmonies. Perfect concord and perfect discord are the two opposite poles of harmony. This is what Plato means by his assertion, that all finite things of beauty live between absolute beauty and absolute ugliness.

The essence of harmony is, that it unites dissimilar elements, so that by the very clashing of their natures they enhance each other's perfections. They fit together, not by any compromise which takes away from their peculiar characters, but by a process of complementary adjustment which brings out their peculiar characters, yet merges them in a new unity. The Beautiful is in fact the reconciliation of contradictions—a Hegelian "Identity of Opposites." Things not beautiful in themselves may even become in a manner beautiful, by being associated with others in the composition of a beautiful whole. The imagination, with its infinite power of association of ideas, finds, as it were, some middle term which reconciles all contradictions. It is thus that the musician works in the resolution of discords. There is something mathematical, as Edgar Poe says, in the working of the highest imagination; and there is something in this imaginative association of ideas which corresponds to the working of the arithmetician, who finds a common denominator for a multitude of fractions not otherwise to be brought together. We all know how sounds, sensations, places, not in themselves delightful, may become so by association of ideas. Such an association of ideas as this belongs to the individuality of the person experiencing it; but there are other associations of ideas which are

practically universal, and to these belong those systems of symbolism by which artists express their conceptions. In an etching, for instance, the mere arrangement of lines and interspaces of white paper expresses a thousand things ; every line is an appeal to the imagination of the beholder, and it is by their united action, by each enhancing the meaning of all the rest, that full expression is arrived at. And this is a type of the universe itself, which is the expression or manifestation of God. And as God manifests Himself not merely through good, but through the eternal struggle between good and evil ; so the Beautiful is not either good or evil, but that for which they both exist. It may be called the triumph of good over evil—or, as Blake more poetically states it, “ the marriage of Heaven and Hell.” And as there is a real Kosmical Order of things, which all beauty reveals ; so there is a real Chaotic Order of things, which all ugliness reveals. And the mystery of Creation is, that there seems to be no guarantee that the Kosmical Order shall always, or even finally, prevail over the Chaotic Order, or evidence that it always does ; and yet we trust in this Kosmical Order. And the mystery of the human will is, that it depends to some extent on each of us whether this Order shall or shall not prevail.

Once we have arrived at the idea that beauty is harmony, and harmony the Kosmical Order, it is easy to see why Love should be the emotion of the Beautiful. Happiness, in its highest conceivable sense, is “ our being’s end and aim,” and happiness is only possible for us through the free activity of

our whole nature ; body, soul, and spirit, must be in harmony with each other, and with the external world. Love is at once the cause and the product of this harmony—the cause, inasmuch as it is the aspiration after our ideal of beauty or perfection, by which we are made one with this ideal ; the product, inasmuch as we must have some harmony in ourselves to be capable of this aspiration, and are indeed started in life with at least a few common chords, which we develop as best we may. Love is the full-toned music of a nature in tune with itself—every note has its harmonics, which ring through the universe. It is, moreover, now easy to see why all arbitrary definitions of the Beautiful must be inadequate. The Kosmical Order is itself only conceivable by us as a perpetual progress towards infinite perfection. The idea of the Beautiful must, therefore, be a progressive one—that is to say, must include more and more in its signification, as our knowledge of the mysteries of the Universe becomes more profound, and our æsthetic sensibilities grow keener.

We have now to distinguish between the Beautiful and the Sublime.

The simplest statement of the difference is this, that they express different moments in the Kosmical Order—or rather, in Creation. The Beautiful we regarded as the resolution of discord—the Sublime we may regard as discord unresolved, but suggesting its resolution. The life of the universe is a progress from absolute Chaos to absolute Kosmos. These are its two poles, the attainment of either of which implies the cessation of this progress—absolute

Chaos meaning annihilation of the whole Creation, and absolute Kosmos its reabsorption into the life of God. Now this progress may be best comprehended under the figure of a grand symphony—an eternal spherical music—with its harmonic changes, modulations, returns to the original key, discords, resolutions. The Beautiful represents the stable element of the harmony, the Sublime the element of change. The Beautiful represents the ever-recurring chords of tonic and dominant, and subdominant, giving form to the composition, proclaiming the key, introducing rest in the midst of restlessness; the Sublime represents the discords and suspensions, opening up new harmonic vistas, leading into strange remote keys, overthrowing, to rebuild on a vaster scale. The Beautiful is the sabbath of Creation, the singing together of the Morning Stars, the shouting for joy of the Sons of God. The Sublime is the falling from heaven of Lucifer, the introduction of strife, of the element of rebellion, of all that we call evil; from which fuller harmonies shall spring. The Beautiful is triumph and joy—the Sublime, struggle and suffering. We lose our self-consciousness in the joy of the Beautiful; we regain it in the awe of the Sublime.

Mr John Burroughs, in his admirable Essay on Walt Whitman, has some fine passages about Beauty, which put the mystery of it before us, and suggest its relations with the Sublime, in a few pregnant sentences, which I cannot do better than quote:

“In ancient mythology Beauty is represented as riding on the back of a lion; meaning, probably,

that beauty cannot be enjoyed alone ; cannot be separated from power, or even savage necessity. In short, that it is linked with its opposite. This is the invariable order of nature.

“ It comes to me that there is something implied or understood, when we look upon a beautiful object, that has quite as much to do with the impression made upon the mind, as anything in the object itself, perhaps more. There is somehow an immense and undefined background of vast and unconscionable energy, as of earthquakes, and ocean storms, and cleft mountains, across which things of beauty play, and to which they constantly defer ; and when the background is wanting, as it is in most current poetry, beauty sickens and dies, or at most has only a feeble existence.

“ Nature does nothing merely for beauty ; beauty follows as the inevitable result ; and the impression of total health and finish, which her works make upon the mind, is owing as much to those things which are not technically called beautiful as to those which are. The former give identity to the latter. The one is to the other what substance is to form, or bone to flesh. The beauty of nature includes all that is called beautiful, as its flower ; and all that is not called beautiful, as its stalk and roots.

“ Indeed when I go to the woods or fields, or ascend to the hill-top, I do not seem to be gazing upon beauty at all, but to be breathing it like the air. I am not dazzled or astonished ; I am in no hurry to look, lest it be gone. I would not have the litter and the *débris* removed, or the banks trimmed, or

the ground painted. What I enjoy is commensurate with the earth and sky itself. It clings to the rocks and trees; it is kindred to the roughness and savagery; it lurks in every tangle and chasm; it perches on the dry oak-stubbs; the fox and the coon give it out as they pass; the crows caw it, and weave it into their nests of coarse sticks; the cattle low it, and every mountain path leads to its haunts. I am not a spectator of, but a participator in it. It becomes as the iron, and lime, and oxygen of my blood and bones. It is not an adornment; its roots strike to the centre of the earth."

Closely connected with the Beautiful and the Sublime are (what we must for want of a better word call) the *Pretty*, and the *Grotesque*, which are, in fact, phases of the former ideas—the *Pretty*, a sub-class of the Beautiful, the *Grotesque*, a sub-class of the Sublime. The Beautiful implies triumph over evil—purity; the *Pretty* merely implies absence of knowledge of evil—innocence. The emotion of the Sublime is the awe produced by the contemplation of the mysterious discords of Creation, but in the *Grotesque* the mind plays with these mysteries. This playfulness may be that of a most reverent mind, which thus seeks relief from "the weight of all this unintelligible world." It feels the discord, but it feels it in faith that it will be resolved. Or it may be the hysterical outburst of an overstrained mind—the mirth of Hamlet after the ghost scene. Or it may be the blasphemous jesting of a base nature with sacred things, and then it degenerates into burlesque. All humour is of the nature of

Grotesque ; but in humour it is chiefly the human feelings that are played with, hence the pathos which underlies it.

As instances of the Sublime and the *Grotesque*, I shall adduce two passages, the one from the Book of Job, and the other from Goethe's *Faust*. I group these two great poems together, because they are closely related—Job is the ancient Faust, Faust the modern Job. Each represents the typical man in his struggle with the mysteries of life. In each the Spirit of Evil is personified, but in Job he is a sublime, in Faust a grotesque personage—the *Grotesque*, which is a more complex thing, had, perhaps, not come into existence when Job was written. The situation in the opening of each poem is the same ; the Spirit of Evil is given permission to tempt man. I shall first read the passage from Job :

“ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

“ And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou ? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

“ And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil ?

“ Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for nought ?

“ Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every

side ? thou hast blessed the work of his hand, and his substance is increased in the land.

“ But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

“ And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power ; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.”

Here we have the awfulness of the mystery of evil put before us with a simple directness in the highest degree sublime. Now hear Mephistopheles. He has been in the presence of the Lord ; but now he is dismissed, heaven closes, and he soliloquises :

Von Zeit zu Zeit seh' ich den Alten gern,
Und hüte mich, mit ihm zu brechen.
's ist gar hübsch von einem grossen Herrn,
So menschlich mit dem Teufel selbst zu sprechen.

Here we have an easy irreverent cynicism, which is in the highest degree grotesque. And Mephistopheles is the more diabolical personage of the two.

In conclusion, I may say that it was quite impossible within the limits of a single lecture to do more than give a general theory of the Beautiful. To apply this theory to the study of art would require a series of lectures. For practical purposes it is convenient to make some categories of the Beautiful. We may speak of *sensuous*, *intellectual*, and *spiritual* beauty, and find them sometimes co-existent in the same object, and sometimes not. A face, for instance,

may have beauty of form, colour, etc., and may express splendid intellect, and yet be deficient in the highest or spiritual beauty, and *vice versa*. Where we have high spiritual beauty revealing itself through a sickly or ill-developed outward form, we often feel a keen sense of the *pathetic*, which, perhaps, may be said to bear the same relation to the Beautiful as the *humorous* does to the Sublime. The *pathetic* and the *humorous* are very closely related, and are connecting links between the Beautiful and the Sublime. In the play of these kindred emotions our humanity is stirred to its depths, and the imagination agitated with vague suggestions of sublimity and beauty, which mingle confusedly before they can be seized and recognised for what they are.

Jouffroy has pointed out that the discrepancies in the judgment of various individuals as to the beauty of any given object, frequently result from the various meanings popularly attached to the word. He therefore makes four categories of the different kinds of beauty, which for practical purposes may be said possibly to co-exist in the same object. In a statue, for instance, we may have, *First*, Invisible Beauty, that is, the beauty of the spiritual thing of which the statue is the expression. We may have the divine radiance of Apollo—a thing of spiritual beauty ; or the gross sensuality of Silenus—a thing of spiritual ugliness. *Secondly*, we may have Beauty of Expression. If the Apollo be only known for an Apollo by certain conventional attributes—a lyre, etc., he becomes merely a hieroglyphic and not an artistic figure ; he loses the beauty of expression ; while the Silenus may perfectly express the grossness

of his nature, and so possess this beauty. *Thirdly*, there is a Beauty of Imitation, as of flesh by marble, etc. ; of a drunken man, by the figure of Silenus, etc. *Fourthly*, there is an Ideal Beauty. The Apollo is full of more splendid humanity than any we see existing in real life—the Silenus is drunker than any drunken man—drunkenness personified, in fact. Now, it is obvious that four persons, each fixing his attention upon one only of these four kinds of beauty, would arrive at very different conclusions respecting any work of art, the truth being that none of them would have grasped the real beauty of it at all.

Ruskin's division of Beauty into Typical and Vital is a very interesting and suggestive one ; and the chapters in the second volume of *Modern Painters*, which he has devoted to the discussion of these two divisions, are most admirable. His analysis of the Imaginative Faculty into its three forms, of Imagination Penetrative, Associative, and Contemplative, and his account of the mode in which the Imagination operates in the production of a work of art, are the only really valuable studies in *Æsthetic Psychology* with which I am acquainted.

I cannot take my leave of you without finally insisting upon the essential difference between true and false beauty. There is a Diabolical Beautiful—a Chaos which simulates Kosmos, a Dead-sea apple full of dust and ashes—which has two principal forms, the *Sanctimonious* and the *Lascivious* ; and there is a Diabolical Sublime, which is no mere step in the Kosmical Order—no passing discord which suggests a resolution—which has two principal forms,

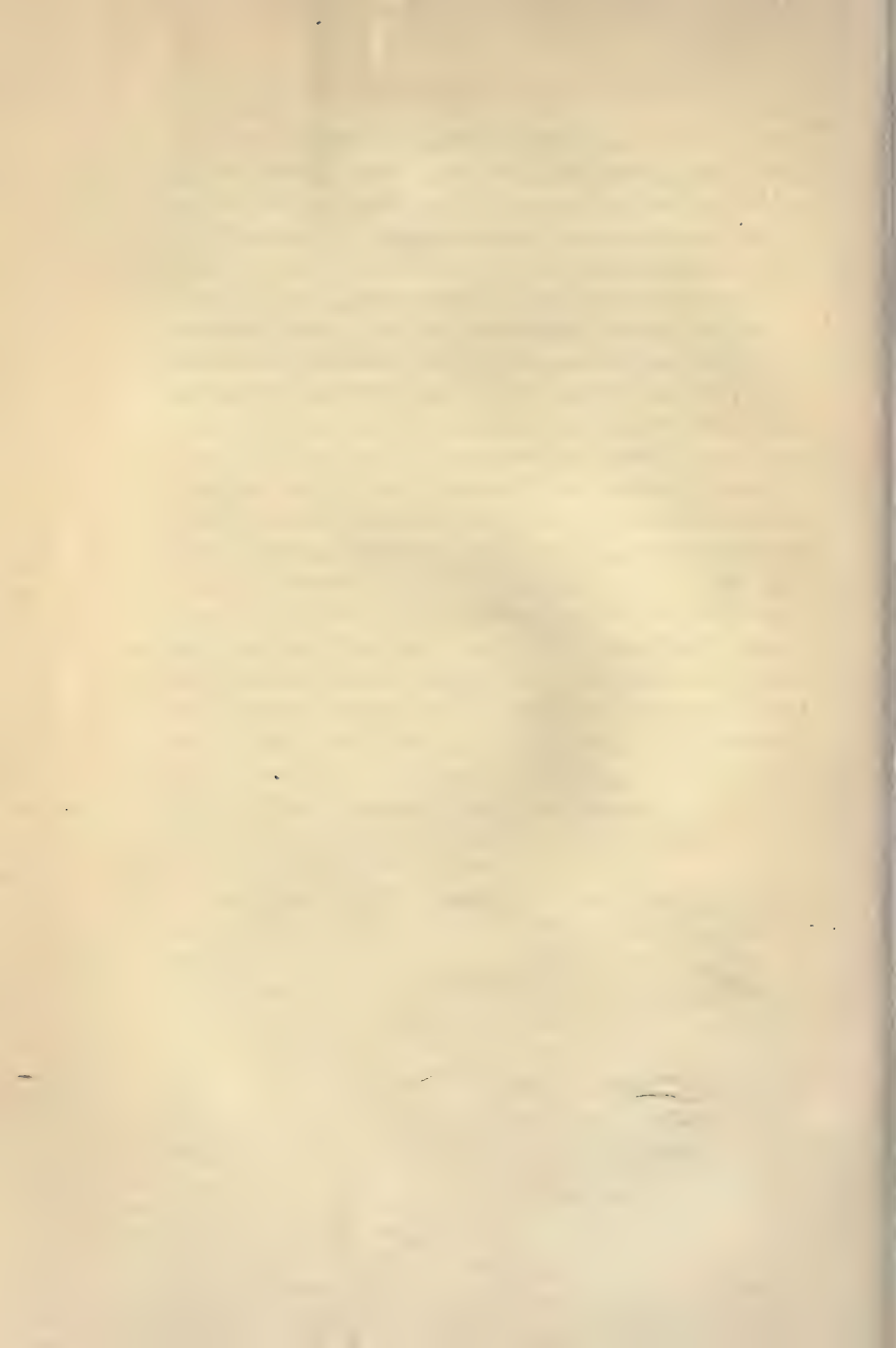
the *Horrible* and the *Burlesque*.¹ All bad artistic forms may be referred to these four classes, which all express some form of spiritual death in the mind of the perpetrator—some numbness and insensibility of his whole nature.

As an example of the *Sanctimonious*, I may adduce a picture lately exhibited here—Sir Noel Paton's *Mors Janua Vitæ*; as one of the *Lascivious*, Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*,² which, in its outward form, is also *Sanctimonious*; indeed these two forms are frequently found co-existent.

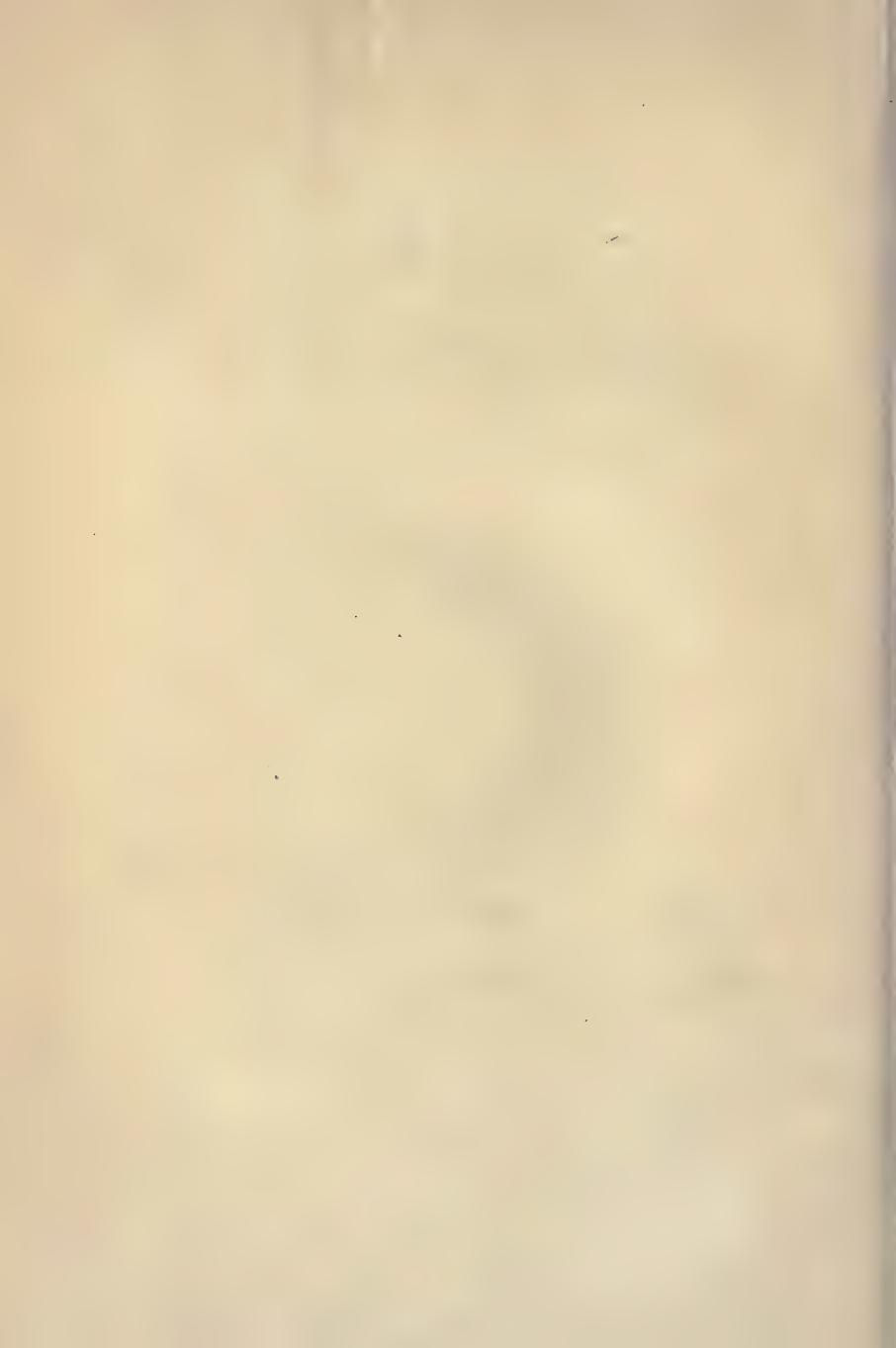
Any mediæval picture in which torture is dwelt on for its own sake, any sensation picture—such as the one of the execution of a slave, exhibited last year in London—will serve as an example of the *Horrible*; any of Offenbach's operas, as an example of the *Burlesque*. These four forms insensibly pass into each other, for they express four mental conditions closely connected—hypocrisy, sensuality, brutality, and blasphemy.

¹ Too hard on the poor *Burlesque*.

Too hard on the poor *Shepherdess*.—J. T.



ESSAYS READ BEFORE "THE
SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES"



AN ESSAY UPON ESSAYS

IN the audacious innocence of that healthy-minded Irishman, who, being asked, Whether he could play the violin, modestly made answer, That he did not know, for he had never tried, I find a vague prophecy, or (as Sir Thomas Browne would say) adumbration of myself. I do not know whether I can write an Essay, for I have never tried.

It is not recorded that this fellow-countryman of mine ever laid bow to string, to test the divine potentialities that were in him. Rather, it may be supposed, he was content to take them for granted ; never indeed to *know* them, but happily to possess his dream, unvanquished as Don Quixote before he had sallied from his study. If so, he was the wiser man, I the more adventurous. For I mean to try, and shall soon enough know ; unless haply, like Don Quixote, I be given grace to front the world panoplied in a dream, and, as it were, find Mambrino's helmet in the brass basin of a barber.

But even to make a first essay at an Essay, it will not serve to stand upon a nice consideration of the difficulty and delicacy of the task ; but rather one must go forward in the childlike spirit of the glorious Knight of La Mancha, finding no impossibilities, because none are looked for.

An Essay, even an untried Essayist may imagine, is in prose composition much what a Sonnet is in

the Field Perilous of verse: the dainty utterance of an impromptu, flowering out of the long quest and errant labours of a lifetime. And which of us cannot indite a sonnet? Is it not the "little key" with which Brown unlocks his heart, and Jones immortalises his thoughts on the mystery of the universe? And, if a sonnet, why not an Essay?

"Man should not dispute or assert, but whisper results to his neighbour," says Keats, in one of those richly-worded letters of his, which have something of the charm of Essays. And is not this "whispering of results" the very essence of a true Essay?

An Essay should be the pure nectar of prose. It must not be eloquent, as from the rostrum; it should be, like poetry, a whisper of the personality—overheard. It should be a graceful record of the table-talk of the man with his neighbour, and that neighbour, *Himself*: or rather let us say, his talk when, by the solitary fireside, with curtains drawn and his books about him, or wandering by some river, or climbing up some mountain-side, he holds amicable converse with himself, and with the spirits that wait upon him.

It should be a glimpse of some ancient and well-tended Garden of the Soul: "a Place," like that imagined by the Persian poet, "of Melancholy, Delight, and Safety; where nought is heard but the Song of the Nightingales, and the peaceful Voices of the many-coloured Doves."

But as there are many personalities even within the man himself, and men are variously framed, so may we, in the Essay, catch glimpses of many such Gardens: gardens full of the mystery and

splendour of an Oriental night, like that in the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's, where the voice of the Bride is heard calling the Bridegroom through the pomegranates, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out; let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits": gardens also wherein the portico of Plato's Academe gleams through the shadow of a grove of solemn cypresses: cloistral gardens, as of some Italian palace or villa, with marble gods, the wreckage of Greece, gazing, pedestalled aloof in passionless majesty, from alcoves fashioned in the greenery of alleys hedged with scented box; where spouting Tritons shed a sound of coolness through sunny spaces, and at every breath of the wind that comes wandering between the massive clumps of ilex, roses shower their petals by terraced water-courses: English gardens too, homely closes, sequestering within their walls, in a happy hotch-potch of the beautiful with the useful, flower-bed and greenhouse, arbour and trellis, with orchard-plot and kitchen-garden; where, on the sunny side of an old yew-hedge, fantastically clipt, flourish the sulphur hollyhocks and blue Canterbury-bells; where a hundred old-fashioned flowers that pleased our younger Grandmothers (being favourites before the days of clouded cane and gold-snuffbox) live like pleasant memories of a bye-gone England; where an old Herbalist might still come upon a nook of simples, basil and camomile, marjoram and rosemary, and thyme with bees about it; where that grey veteran, the sundial, stands, an unrelieved sentinel, on the broad walk edged with strawberries, and tells of

days when Time himself took his hours of philosophic leisure with the bees and flowers.

What an Essay might be written on this theme "Of Gardens," even after that great one of our first Essayist, could one but "refine some English" for its fitting diction!

Our solemn Bacon deals solemnly with words, as if he would make us feel with what reverence we should use them. For words are the symbols of men's forgotten dreams, and with them we may frame incantations, to rescue our own from prompt oblivion.

All the great Essayists are adepts in the occult wizardry of words. They choose words like initiates, knowing the power of each on the human spirit, and set them, like notes of a magic diapason, or hues graduated through a scale of symbolic colour, in rhythmic sentences that have the efficacy of spells.

Take that first sentence in Bacon's *Essay Of Gardens*, in which he makes the sun of Paradise to shine upon the cottage-gardens of the poor no less than upon the rich man's pleasaunce.

"God Almighty first planted a garden, and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures: it is the greatest refreshment to the spirit of man, without which building and palaces are but gross handiworks."

Bacon was a wise man, and he embodies his wisdom in gnomic sentences, which have the hard outlines of graven gems. His wisdom is that of a man of wide outward experience, and finely cultivated common sense. The material world was to him opaque and solid. He did not feel, as Blake did, that it was, but a veil, wherein we see and touch the pulsating

wings of a "Covering Cherub." His periods march like a Roman army, with captains mailed in gold, and centurions cloaked in scarlet, to the sound of brazen trumpets, as they go forth to order the provinces of Knowledge under the standards of Reason.

Yet there are passages in which he evokes a rarer music, as in that *Essay Of Adversity*, where he says :

"Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, Adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction, and the clearer revelation of God's favour. Yet even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon."

This, in the *Essay Of Friendship*, is quaintly expressed.

"The Parable of Pythagoras is dark, but true, *Cor ne edito*—eat not the heart. Certainly, if a man would give it a hard phrase, those that want friends to open themselves unto, are cannibals of their own hearts; but one thing is most admirable, which is, that this communicating of a man's self to his friend works two contrary effects, for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in halves."

It would have been well if the people of England had earlier laid to heart what he says of toleration in another place :

"Concerning the means of procuring unity, men must beware, that in the procuring or in muniting of religious unity, they do not dissolve and deface the laws of charity and of human society. There

be two swords amongst Christians, the spiritual and the temporal, and both have their due office and place in the maintenance of religion; but we may not take up the third sword, which is Mahomet's sword, or like unto it—that is, to propagate religion by wars, or by sanguinary persecutions to force consciences; . . . for this is but to dash the first table against the second; and so to consider men as Christians, as we forget that they are men."

It was with Mahomet's sword, or like unto it, that Ireland was misruled from Elizabeth nearly to Victoria; doubtless that the sacred duty of rebellion might so be continually fostered among the too easy-going natives.

It would be pleasant to linger awhile among the prose writers whom we vaguely think of as Elizabethan; picturing them to ourselves in ruffs and trunk-hose, though these were becoming notes of antiquity when they were born, and many of their famous names were first heard at the font of baptism after the great Queen had dedicated her inveterate virginity to the tomb. But our instinct is not bound to the convention of classifying by Kings' reigns. Kings and Queens are but milestones on the highway of literature. It is but a stage from Elizabeth to Anne, another from Anne to Victoria. Bacon carried his greatness and his clouded fame as far as the second year of Charles the Martyr. Sir Thomas Browne, born under that "High and Mighty Prince James," who sent Raleigh to the block, was at the time of Bacon's death just of age; and Jeremy Taylor, not yet skilled in the art of holy living and dying, a boy of thirteen.

Many of the men of this Maytime of English prose, though their works are not called essays, have the imaginative or fanciful touch, and mellow cadences of the born essayist. The sermons of Jeremy Taylor have the flavour of essays, as his essays, if he had written any, would have had the gravity of sermons.

That is a wise and stately discourse of his upon Marriage. It comes to us with patriarchal accents from the well-ordered homesteads of an older world than ours, wherein marriage was still held not as a human fashion but of Divine institution; before even Master John Milton, that stern schoolmaster and husband, had, from a certain four-stringed instrument of his own invention, the Tetrachordon, thundered forth texts of Scripture in support of his heretical "Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce." Yet in the meditations of our old Divine we catch a hint of that bitterness of Eve's portion of the Apple, which has sent the Cythnas of this later time careering about the Golden (or Brazen) City of our man-made morality on their Tartarian steeds. But in Taylor's time their silver clarions were not yet shrill in the air; the sacred walls had not yet begun to shudder and crack, like those of Jericho; the long-suffering Griselda, outlawed by her Lord, had not yet returned, terrible in Amazonian mail, to prevail against him with the sword of the new Justice, proclaiming that the Word of the Future is with women, and the day of their deliverance at hand. Of marriage he says:

"They that enter into the State of Marriage cast a Die of the greatest contingencie and yet of the greatest interest in the World, next to the last throwe

for Eternity. Life or Death, Felicity or a lasting Sorrow, are in the dower of Marriage. A Woman, indeed, ventures most, for she hath no Sanctuary to retire to from an evil Husband ; she must dwell upon her Sorrow, and hatch the Egges which her own Folly or Infelicity hath produced ; and she is more under it, because her Tormentor hath a warrant of Prerogative, and the Woman may complain to God, as subjects doe of tyrant Princes ; but otherwise she hath no Appeal in the causes of Unkindnesse. And though the Man can runne from manie Hours of his Sadnesse, yet he must return to it again ; and when he sittes among his Neighbours, he remembers the Objection that is in his Bosome, and he sighs deeply. The Boyes, and the Peddlers and Fruiterers, shall tell of this Man when he is carried to his Grave, that he liv'd and died a poor wretched person. . . .

“ But when a Man dwells in Love, then the Brestes of his wife are pleasant as the droppings upon the Hill of Hermon ; her eies are fair as the Light of Heaven ; she is a Fountain sealed, and he can quench his Thirst, and ease his Cares, and lay his Sorrows down upon her lap, and can retire home to his Sanctuary and Refectory, and his Gardens of sweetness and chaste Refreshments. No Man can tell but he that loves his Children, how many delicious accents make a man's Heart dance in the pretty conversation of those deare Pledges ; their childishnesse, their Stammering, their little Angers, their Innocence, their Imperfections, their Necessities, are so manie little emanations of Joy and Comfort to him that delights in their Persones and Society.”

Taylor's book of sermons was called *The Golden*

Grove, after a pleasant haunt of his leisure, the seat of his patron, the Earl of Carberry : it was a happy title, symbolic of that grove of blessed thoughts wherein it was his wont to walk, in a perpetual sense of the Divine Presence.

His contemporary, older in years, Sir Thomas Browne, seems the more primæval yet younger spirit. He was an elder brother of the "Weltkind," Goethe : at home with Plato and the Greek philosophers, as with the mediæval mystics and alchemists ; yet the friend of Boyle, and co-worker with him and the infant Royal Society. The balm of antiquity is grave in the garments of his early manhood ; yet, as he grows older, he turns with a young impatience from things ancient, to bathe, like Faust, in morning dew, as the eager Earth wheels onward to meet the light of coming day.

There is something strange and vast in the reaches of his personality. In such a form the demi-god Æsculapius, tired of wandering in other planets, might come back ; to pass by new incarnations through the dim centuries after Christ, still keeping a sane fibre or two of his old Pagan heart. One might even figure him, somewhat like that portrait of Lionardo in Florence, as a man in the midmost years of manhood, with a face grave with brooding over the garnered memories of an age not counted by years, and the alert and forward-looking eyes of youth. It is the face of a magician.

In the quaintest fantasies of his meditations, the pedantries of learning bud and blossom—touched by the quickening fire of his spirit. His words are like the drugs of Medæa, "that did renew old Æson."

The tritest themes of the moralist are for him things with the dew of morning upon them. On the vanity of fame, striving against inevitable oblivion, he thus comments :

“ But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her Poppy, and deals with the Memory of Men without distinction to Merits of perpetuity : who can but pity the Founder of the Pyramids ? Herostratus lives that burnt the Temple of Diana ; he is almost lost that built it : Time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian’s Horse ; confounded that of Himself.”

And of the Egyptians’ care for the preservation of their bodies, he says :

“ But all was Vanity, feeding the Wind, and Folly. The Egyptian Mummies which Cambyses or Time hath spared, Avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandise ; Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for Balsams.”

The religion of this Physician is not the theology of the Schools ; it is a theosophy of his own personality. He holds the doubts of his sceptical reason in solution in the universal menstruum of his faith. He is a devout heretic, burning incense at forsaken altars, banned by the newer hierarchies, to the God who is a Spirit, in whom all human spirits find rest and entertainment. He looks through the night of ages to that morning of creation which began before the voices of the Morning Stars were heard acclaiming it, and which still goes forward, leading then onward with ever-renewed rising of eternal dawn. He finds the great Arcanum in common things, and is exalted. His child-like ecstasy of wonder is not far removed from worship.

“The Treasures of Time,” he says, in his treatise on Urn Burial, “lie high, in Urns, Coins, and Monuments, scarce beneath the roots of some Vegetables. Time hath endlesse Rarities, and shows of all Varieties; which reveals old things in Heaven and makes new discoveries in Earth, and even earth itself a Discovery. That great antiquity, America, lay buried for a thousand years; and a large part of the earth is still in the Urn to us.”

And in the *Religio Medici* he shows that the world within us is no less wonderful than that without.

“I could never content my contemplation with those generall Pieces of Wonder, the flux and reflux of the Sea, the increase of Nile, the conversion of the Needle to the North, and have studied to match and parallel those in the more neglected pieces of Nature, which without further travel I can do in the Cosmography of my self; we carry with us the wonders we seek without us: There is all Africa and her prodigies in us, we are that bold and adventurous piece of nature, which he that studies wisely learns in a compendium, what others labour at in a divided piece and endlesse volume.”

There are many well-cut gems to be found in the *Occasional Meditations* of “that incomparable Prelate, Joseph Hall, D.D., late Bishop of Norwich”; the friend and patient of Sir Thomas Browne, who lived, died, and is entombed in his diocese. The good Bishop loved to contemplate the gentle operations of nature. The sight of “a Tree full blossomed,” or “an Owl in the Twilight,” moved his imagination. Birds and snails, those creatures painted with such affectionate skill by Crivelli, as constant accessories

in his sacred pictures, are no less delicately touched by Hall. "A Redbreast coming into his chamber" wakens devout thoughts as "cheerfully" the "pretty bird" does "sit and sing," not knowing where he shall find his next meal. "The sight of two Snails" is a text whereon to moralise. So also at the kindling of a charcoal fire, the worthy Churchman is put in mind of the kindling of great heresies by a little spark.

"When we see the Church on a flame, it is too late to complain of the flint and steel; it is the holy wisdom of superiors to prevent the dangerous attritions of stubborn and wrangling spirits, or to quench their first sparks in the tinder."

Upon hearing of Musick by Night he thus meditates:

"How sweetly doth this Musick sound! In the daytime it would not, it could not so much affect the ear. All harmonious sounds are advanced by a silent Darknesse; thus it is with the Glad Tidings of Salvation; the Gospel never sounds so sweet as in the night of preservation, or of our own private affliction; it is ever the same, the difference is in our disposition to receive it."

I think Milton's mind, when he turned from his earlier verse to prose, was too polemic for the Essay. In his hands the instrument of expression swells to the hundred-reeded pipe of Polyphemus: the thing becomes an organ, thundering oceanic eloquence. We may pass over the mountain-tops of the tractates, as upon the flying carpet of an eastern tale, to seek that milder climate, where, in well-trimmed alleys, the ingenious Mr Addison sedately walks; making a call upon Cowley by the way. For indeed Cowley dwells in a half-way house between the Elizabethans

and the wits of Queen Anne. Milton's junior by a decade, he was born two years after Shakespeare died, and he was but five years dead when Addison was born. As in time, so in style, he is intermediate. He has less of solemn phantasy than even Bacon, and is less involved in his periods than any man of his day. There are no vastitudes in Cowley, no unexplored regions in his personality. His Sabine Farm is redeemed from wilderness; he has reduced himself to order. Occasionally his reflexions on life have something of the sententiousness of Bacon; but in general they lack his pregnancy, as they lack the unexpectedness of Sir Thomas Browne. He is at his best when content to decline a little from his Stoic heights, to the everyday level of his temperament; to express not what the virtuous man ought to feel, but what the man himself does feel. When he dons his dressing-gown and slippers, his humorous melancholy has free play.

When, after he had given the best years of his life to the arduous service of Charles II. (who like a true-born Stuart rewarded him with neglect), he retired, content in disappointment, to his little farm at Chertsey, his style became easier and more genial. In that Essay, *Of Myself*, the narrative passages telling of his shy youth, and the struggles with adverse circumstances, are delightful. But I must content myself with a brief extract from that satire upon the knaveries of men entitled, *The Dangers of an Honest Man in much Company*.

"I thought, when I went first to dwell in the Country, that, without doubt, I should have met there with the simplicity of the old Golden Age;

I thought to have found no inhabitants there, but such as the Shepherds of Sir Philip Sidney in Arcadia, or of Monsieur D'Urfé upon the banks of Lignon ; and began to consider with myself, which way I might recommend no less to posterity the happiness and innocence of the men of Chertsea ; but, to confess the truth, I perceived quickly, that I was still in England, and not in Arcadia or La Forrest ; that if I could not content myself with anything less than exact fidelity in human conversation, I had almost as good go back and seek for it in the Court, or the Exchange, or Westminster Hall. I ask again then, Whither shall we fly, or what shall we do ? ”

Such passages as this bring us very near to Addison. A passing bow of recognition to Dryden for his manly and nervous prose, which has a simpler and ruder force than that of Cowley, and we are in the midst of the Coffee-house wits of Queen Anne. We have left the tropical luxuriance of the older time far behind ; the half-tamed wilderness has become a courtly pleasure-ground. Highroads have been driven through the primæval forests of the English mind ; they are laid out in lots for building ; the red brick of our new domestic architecture gleams pleasantly through the trees. We are in the age of courteous bowing and scraping, of Sir and Madam ! The politeness of the age is reflected in its literature. We think of the Elizabethans as skilled in the manage of the “ Great Horse.” He prances with gorgeous housings in their style. But these gallants of Queen Anne pace their stately minuets with graceful carriage of plumed hat and rapier, in choice phrases of an elegant simplicity. The Field of the Cloth of Gold,

the "pride, pomp, circumstance" of the tilt-yard, is rich in the swelling majesty of the reverberated clauses of the older men. But now imagination itself must enter the school of genteel correctness. Learning must keep its place, and ruffle it easily like a man of the world. Even Cowley brocades his Essays with flowers of classical antiquity; but Addison is content with an apt phrase or so from Horace or Virgil. Deep in the soul of Sir Thomas Browne we find the balm of old Egypt; and the magic arts of Alchemy and Astrology still, from his study shelves, whisper the spells that stir the wings of hovering spirits. Behind Addison the now adult Royal Society is in full session. The new science is coming into vogue. Oxygen and the modern elements are waiting for their cue to come upon the stage.

Addison's *Spectator* papers have a perennial charm. They give us a lively picture of the life of his time reflected in the polished mirror of his delightful style, in which the common language of the town becomes a medium of elegant expression. He never errs against taste nor loses his human sympathy, like the great Mohawk, Swift, who remains a savage, brandishing tomahawk and scalping-knife; wielding his ferocious irony with that *sæva indignatio* which made him rage like a madman against the Yahoo, man.

Addison satirises the follies of the day; but he satirises them with a genial humour. We breathe the very air of the period in his works. Its modish jargon seems native to our tongues. We can almost fancy ourselves capable of exchanging snuff and scandal with the ogling fops of the Mall. "Sir, I

am told your stout Irish rascals have fuddled themselves at the Boar, and overturned your chair. May I beg you to pass an hour with me in my poor lodging? I would crave your judgment upon a rarity or two." "I protest, Sir, you are vastly civil; but my Lord has just made me the obliging offer of his coach to carry me to Lady Betty's rout." "Then, Sir, you shall make one of our supper party. You shall meet Sir Harry Wildrake, and a couple of sparks more, who positively clamour for your acquaintance. Sure, Sir, you cannot refuse to toast the beautiful Mistress Dashaway in her own slipper?"

But I am not going to paragraph the *Spectator*. Has not Addison himself come to the banquets of the Odd Volumes? Has not good Sir Roger, in his habit as he lived, burnt his pipe of Virginia in our midst? ¹

Goldsmith's Essays are not masterpieces, like *The Vicar of Wakefield*, which was a genuine inspiration; though they contain many charming passages, easy, unaffected, full of the practical wisdom of adversity. He was unfortunately one of those writers who have to write to eat, and his genius suffers constraint in the "pot-boiler." We often feel sorry that his precious "ink must earn ale, and three-penny ordinaries"; in an evil day when the trade of the literary hack was a miserable one. There is a melancholy interest in those bits of self-revelation, when, under a thin veil, he relates his own experiences.

This, from the *Citizen of the World*, is in that vein of satirical irony which he sometimes affected. The

¹ See Note.

Chinese Traveller is speaking of Westminster Abbey ; which he has not yet visited.

“ There, I am told, I shall see justice done to deceased merit ; none, I am told, are permitted to be buried there but such as have adorned as well as improved mankind. There no intruders, by the influence of friends, or fortune, presume to mix their unhallowed ashes with philosophers, heroes, and poets. Nothing but true merit has a place in that awful sanctuary : the guardianship of the tombs is committed to several learned priests, who are never guilty for a superior reward of taking down the names of good men, to make room for others of equivocal character, nor ever profane the sacred walls with pageants, that posterity cannot know, or shall blush to own.”

Poor Goldsmith ! He had a narrow escape of the Abbey himself. His pall was to have been borne by Burke, Sir Joshua, and other immortals of the Club where Johnson talked and Boswell noted. But it fell through. That pageant, which posterity need not have blushed to own, never took place. The humble tomb in the shadow of the Temple Church is perhaps more appropriate.

It would be pleasant to hear the talk of some of our later Essayists, De Quincey, Leigh Hunt, or the gentle Charles Lamb, at our table, if the ever-moving hand of the dial could be held back awhile. Hunt is not a *great* Essayist ; but he is a genial host on the slopes of Parnassus, and chats easily of the poets ; bringing out his favourite passages with the air of a connoisseur in rare vintages, and making you taste the bouquet of some choice phrase, as he smacks

his lips over it. Peace be to his ashes, for his early recognition of the genius of Keats, over whom he purred his kindly appreciation, when the poet of the nightingale was still unknown !

De Quincey was "built the higher in learning" : a rare scholar and man of letters ; one indeed whose mind was a curiosity-shop of all kinds of knowledge, in the way or out of the way. He was a master of English prose, and played cunningly upon it, as on an instrument of which he knew all the stops. But there is often more of skill than of delightfulness in his playing, a practising of passages rather than a noble music. He loves whimsical subtleties, and sometimes seems to set his genius to barren tasks, twisting ropes of sand, threshing straw, and winnowing chaff. Yet, at his best, he is a great writer. Those Dream Fugues of his, and the *Suspiria*, haunt the imagination strangely.

With Lamb we are in touch with antiquity. The aroma of age is for him as intoxicating as the fragrance of June roses ; and he carries the mania for rarities into literature. He is a collector of Odd Volumes ; but he loves them not merely for their binding or their title-pages. They are not dumb to him. They sing and murmur on his shelves. They are at home with him, and convivial in his presence. He might be himself their Oddship, and lead the Muses' revel.

His style is that of a bookish man ; but the Classics he loves are those of his own country. He is redolent of the old English worthies : has outwatched the Bear with Sir Thomas Browne, is on terms of gossipry with old Hooker, has trolled a catch in country inns

with Izaak Walton, has drunk the eloquence of Jeremy Taylor, and sat in silent meetings, overbrooded by the Spirit, with the Quaker, John Woolman. Quaint old-fashioned thoughts crop up in him, by a sort of spiritual atavism. His roots are deep in our early literature ; but his flowers and fruit are those of a well-grafted tree of modern culture, set in the air of our later age.

That pungent, old-fashioned style of his, those pedantries that are not felt to be pedantic, are but "the limbs and outward flourishes" of his wit ; which yet never outstretch patience and turn to tediousness. They are the Kelmscott-press type, and artistic binding of the rare Odd Volume *Elia*. Under them beats the tender, loving, loyal, and heroic heart of Charles Lamb.

But who shall dare to praise him in words less dainty than his own ? The man who loves him not has no music in his soul.

I would fain add a word about a man or two since Lamb ; for English Literature is not yet dead ; though in those waste-places, yclept Magazines, where eminent men are allowed to shoot their words like so many bricks from a contractor's cart, its death may seem imminent. Stevenson, our latter-day Defoe, is but just reported absent. John Addington Symonds has not long laid down the pen which touched with the true spirit of the Essay his favourite haunts, old Italian towns, and nooks of the Riviera. That great master of modern prose, Walter Pater, an ascetic tonsured in the cult of Beauty, has but lately joined the immortals. George Meredith still lives to teaze and fascinate us with those fantastic

Essays, in novel form, in which he so shrewdly analyses modern men and women, at home with themselves or abroad in society. In a strange tongue they discourse, and in a stranger tongue the great author discourses of them. Then has not the multifarious Andrew Lang, "wearing all that weight of learning lightly like a flower," made the pot-boiler a work of art? Are not those "leaderettes," wherein his satiric humour so amiably smiles, "Essays in Little"?

And younger writers are daily coming to the front; some with that true feeling for artistic workmanship which is the soul of good literature. Has not our own Brother, the Rhymer, without quitting the facile fields of verse, won his spurs in the more arduous walks of prose? May we not boast of a born, and not altogether unmade, Essayist in the Sette?

But now, in the words of the Author of *The Garden of Cyrus*, "The Quincunx of Heaven runs low, and 'tis time to close the Five Ports of knowledge. We are unwilling to spin out our awaking thoughts into the Phantasms of Sleep . . . To keep our eyes open longer, were but to act our Antipodes. The huntsmen are up in America, and they are already past their first sleep in Persia."

In my own poor garden, the shadows of the trees are long upon the grass. The great Angels of Time and Space, that condition the lives of men, stand dimly by the sundial. They wave me to the gate. Soon the cry that resounds at evenfall through the remotest coverts of Kew, "All out!" will thrill me from their tongues. I must pass the portal; not now "with dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms";

for has not Paradise been, potentially at least, since then regained ?

In the angelic door-wards methinks I catch some semblance of the heavenly host that, on the first Christmas morn, brought glad tidings to the shepherds : " Peace on earth, and goodwill toward men ! " They seem to bid me God speed, with not unmelodious farewells. Perhaps, at the appointed time, even I may find the golden gates open to me once more. Till then, *valet* !

" Has not Addison himself come to the banquets of the Odd Volumes ? "

The writer in his minutes as Secretary here supposes Addison and Sir Roger at the banquet of " The Sette. "

A RIVERSIDE WALK

ON the outskirts of the creeping plague-spot of modern London, the London of improving neighbourhoods and the jerry-builder, one sometimes comes upon places where the rural spirit of Old England still pathetically lingers ; scraps of country, surrounded, contaminated, yet not altogether overwhelmed by the squalid tide of our commercial civilisation. Such a spot I happened on some time since—not so very long ago, either ; but Father Time has no leisure for sauntering now-a-days, and the hand of change has been busy with it.

It was an afternoon in mid October, gloomy and grandiose, breathing of opulent decay : the old year, dying in its ripeness, was leaving in its mouldering coffers rich legacies of life to its heirs, born and unborn. From the once pretty village of Chiswick, now dingy with suburban grime, I crossed the dull waters of the Thames by the ferry below the churchyard where, through the din of hammers from Thornycroft's torpedo-boat factory, Hogarth sleeps. As for Chiswick Church itself—its homely red-brick walls, once the delightful " harvest of a quiet eye " are now but a memory. A new grey building has been tacked on to the old grey tower.

I had but one fellow-passenger in my transit ; and the ferryman, a glum, beetle-browed and much weather-beaten Charon, whose place now knows

him no more, seemed absorbed in the solemn smoking of his black four inches of clay pipe, cutting short all attempts at conversation with grumpy monosyllables. He took his fee in silence, and I landed, and walked along the river bank in the direction of Kew.

The upper sky was cloudless, yet not clear, dulled by the smoky haze of dun autumnal mist, through which the sun glowed hotly, though the air had in it a keen foreboding of frost. Beside me flowed the river, silent and sullen, a gleam of ruddy gold here and there upon its chilly ripples.

The path along which I walked was overhung by great unpollarded willows, dropping slowly their yellow, red-pimpled leaves, which wavered sadly down through the fog. The ground was strown with them, the air sweet with their faint, sickly perfume. The familiar smell set me dreaming of my own childhood; for, in the kitchen-garden of the old house where I was born there was a huge "sally-tree," as they call it in Ireland, that used to drop its pimpled leaves, and fill the air with melancholy odour, just like these. I was told the red spots were a disease caused by a grub, which indeed I found wriggling in the middle of an opened gall. This added to my small stock of information; but, like other scantlings of the Tree of Knowledge, it had its unpleasant aspect. I did not like the notion of a sick tree. To the young human animal there is something horrible in sickness, even in a tree—much more in a human being. Pity may overcome repugnance; but repugnance is the more primitive instinct.

As I drew near a straggling offset from the village

of Mortlake, the porch of the " Bull's Head " Inn, supported upon its two pillars in a style derived from that which figures in old architectural treatises as " Tuscan," stood out from the houses on either side. In harsh discord with this porch, which kept a certain tradition—or at least suggestion—of eighteenth-century elegance, was the side of a house near it, papered all over with hideous specimens of that oriflamme of our commercial prosperity—the modern poster. Conspicuous among these Reckitt's Blue—which seems, if these pictorial placards are to be trusted, to have defiled all the lakes and seas of Europe—endeavoured to shout down *The Daily Telegraph's* insolent assertion that it had the largest circulation in the world.

This Babel of advertisements did not, however, seem to disturb the equanimity of the little riverside houses, many of them with a simple and pleasant old-fashioned air about them. A much worse grievance, against which they uttered a quiet protest, was that the public road had most cavalierly asserted a right of way through their small domains, remorselessly cutting down their front gardens to the smallest possible dimensions. Many of them were sunk some feet below the level of the pathway, in mere pits, across which their pretty bow windows projected, leaving but scant standing-room for a green shrub or two. Upon these windows the passers-by looked down, and could almost touch their curved panes with outstretched fingers.

It was the ancestors of windows like these, so characteristically English, that attracted the notice of De Sorbières, when he came to see the author of

Leviathan, in 1663. "All over England," he says, "they protrude and shape themselves into a sort of balcony, either polygonal or semi-circular; they appear as so many little towers and give elegance to the outside of the houses when once the eye hath become accustomed to them." In the villages, even then, he found the windows low and without shutters, "which shows that the inhabitants do not fear insults or revenge."

"Further on, the houses were more sparsely scattered, and I even caught glimpses of a green field, not yet built over, in which cows were grazing; but soon I came upon one of those patches of devastation known as "Valuable Freehold Estates." Some small houses had already been reduced to heaps of rubbish, and others were in process of demolition. An abomination of desolation reigned around the contractor's carts and sheds. There was the usual notice-board informing intending purchasers of lots to what eminent firm they should apply; with the inhospitable postscript—"Trespassers will be prosecuted." It stood in a ruined garden, a remnant of the grounds of a Georgian villa, a garden wherein flourished a plentiful crop of weeds. To the old brick walls of it the neglected fruit-trees still clung, and on one side was a long vinery, with rotting sashes and many a broken pane. Elsewhere were the remains of a *rococo* grotto. Why, may one ask parenthetically, did this word, properly *grotta*, change its gender in coming to us from Italy? This one was of water-worn stones, and built no doubt when such things were still considered "vastly genteel." More than genteel, indeed elegant in its way, with a feeling for

dignity and refinement in its lines, was a piece of decorative stucco-work on the front of the house, in which conventional palm-branches and oval shields or medallions were daintily handled.

To the philosophic mind, which, like a mild-eyed cow loves to ruminate upon the cud of trite reflections, this poor doomed place might serve as a symbol of those innocent Paradises out of which the Angel of Life drives us with his fiery sword. Was not that sword here visible under semblance of the contractor's crowbar, which had already attacked one of the walls of the garden ?

I am sorry I did not trespass through that breach, sorry my feet did not wake the echoes, doubtless with some tones of decayed gentility in their voices, which must have haunted the rooms of that old house. Perhaps I might have found some graceful piece of Italian plaster-work, a cornice or ceiling-ornament. Perhaps a chimney-piece of coloured marble might still have remained in the well-proportioned drawing-room of the period ; for in those unhurrying days life still retained its homely dignities, and even house-builders had some sense of proportion. Perhaps, too, in the back garden, which I did not see, its presiding genius—some marble faun (in plaster)—might still stand, awaiting his transformation into rubbish. Alas ! I was too timid and law-abiding to seize the opportunity, which, like other lost opportunities, will never return. The old house and garden have vanished from the face of the earth ; though, it may be, still visible through the gigantic telescopes of some planet of Sirius, or some yet remoter sun. For, if one can but get far enough away, all things are

immortal, and with good eyes and nimble retrocession you may even read history backwards. To read it forwards you must go through the veil of appearances, much as Alice went through the looking-glass ; for the future, like an actor awaiting his cue to enter, lurks behind it.

But now, as I walked on, the more business-like soul of Mortlake, of which the small bow-windowed houses were but "limbs and outward flourishes," with more stolid self-assertion barred my way by the river-side, and I was compelled to turn toward the High Street.

Before reaching this, an announcement painted on a board at the corner of an inn, in front of which an omnibus without horses was standing, caught my eye :

"An ordinary daily at 1.15."

An ordinary ! The quaint old word seemed redolent of the days of "Eliza and our James," when, I take it, it was equivalent to the modern "*Table d'hôte, à prix fixe*." The price quoted on the board was one-and-sixpence : just sixpence less than the two shillings charged for an ordinary of the better class in Shakespeare's time. Probably there was an ordinary at the "Mermaid," where old Ben may often have crushed a cup of sack with his gentle Will. By-the-bye, this crushing of a cup (I protest I have never yet come across the erudite school-boy who knew this, though I am bound to believe in his existence) was much like the "cracking of a bottle," they say, and meant leaving no heel-taps ; which I warrant you these worthies would never do, if the

wine were good. Afterwards they doubtless beguiled the time with a match at shovel-board. Did they play with smooth ha'pence, or did they, in bold Bardolphian fashion, "quoit each other down with a shove-groat shilling?"

The ordinary, as the house of entertainment came to be called, after the meal to which the term was first applied, was always a place where the gallants met to spin off the "staple of news," pass judgment on the newest play, and discuss the most recent scandal; but in later Jacobean days it lost its primitive innocence and developed into a gambling-hell. Then, when tables were "voyded," the rattle of the dice-box and dealing of cards became the order of the day.

How long the word "ordinary" remained in vogue, let students of manners and customs determine. Has not Shakspeare touched it with his imagination, and given it an immortal reach in that speech of Enobarbus:

Our courteous Antony,
Whom ne'er the word of 'No' woman heard speak,
Being barber'd ten times o'er, goes to the feast,
And, for his ordinary, pays his heart,
For what his eyes eat only.

And there is still an ordinary daily at 1.30 in Mortlake! Surely that horseless omnibus must have brought thither a company in ruffs, slashed sleeves, and trunk-hose, in stomachers and farthingales?

Off the High Street run many grimy lanes and alleys, some with strange names, such as "Tinderbox Alley." Whence came this name? Did they make

tinderboxes here before the old sulphurous lucifer regained all his original brightness, and shone with sudden splendour as our latter-day Phosphorus, until at last he tipped his waxen torch with vestal fire? The older matches seem to have been made anywhere save in heaven; but blessed is the match over whose House of Life the chaste Vesta presides.

These names (and what are all the words in the dictionary but names?) are curious things. Do we not, sometimes, catch ourselves brooding over the strange sound or aspect of a familiar word, as though it were an incantation, the mysterious power of which we dimly feel? And an incantation it is, or a piece of one; hold it to your ear like a sea-shell, and you shall hear some faint murmur of the remote beginnings of language, when the articulate word first summoned the spirit of man from the vague deep of primæval consciousness. For, as man became strong by the delicate craft of his hand, even so did he become wise by the subtle music of his tongue. So much, then, for a glance up Tinderbox Alley, and the vistas revealed by the commonplace philosopher's perspective glass.

As I passed the Parish Church of St Mary, I was tempted to enter the quiet churchyard, with its grey tombstones, and yew-trees, which seemed of newer plantation than that of most of the dead they thinly overshadowed in the green grass. Glancing at the gateway, through which I looked, I saw that the latticed uprights on which the iron gates were hung were crowned with a rude reproduction of the Greek honeysuckle—not the only “pretty piece of paganism” that has been adapted to Christian uses. The

history of Church rituals, vestments and ornaments, carries us back to strange origins and dark initiations. Religion is older than its temples, and may outlast them.

As I entered, I met a procession of mourners, among whom was a woman, weeping, and holding a little boy by the hand, preceded by a blue-faced mute in the barbarous paraphernalia of sorrow : an old-world incident not out of keeping with the place.

When they had passed by, I stood and looked at the old church-tower, with its thick mantle of ivy. On a stone tablet in the wall, I read the inscription :

Vivat

R. H. 8—

1514

This R. H. 8 was, I presume, Rex Henricus, eighth of that name, in whose reign the tower was no doubt built. He was then still a good catholic, though not yet Defender of the Faith.

In this very year 1514, Knight (the historian I usually consult in emergencies, as he sits at my elbow on my own book-shelf) tells me there was what Horatio would have called " a romage in the land," a great bustle of preparation for war against France. Knowing my love for contemporary documents, he goes on to quote one. About the month of May that year, " Prior John, great Captain of the French navy,

with his Galleys and Foists," (which seem to have been pinnaces carrying sail) "charged with great Basilisks and other great artillery, came on the borders of Sussex, and came a-land on the Night, at a poor village in Sussex called Brighthelmstone; and ere the watch could him descry he set Fire on the Towne, and took such poor goods as he found." The watch, however, when they did descry him, drove him back to his foist, and the archers sent a shower of arrows after him, one of which wounded him in the face. This arrow, stuck in a waxen *effigies* of his cheek, he dedicated to our Lady of Boulogne in gratitude for his escape.

In that same year, Knight says, the romance between Henry's sister Mary and Charles Brandon, who brought her back from France as his wife, culminated happily in the King's bon-mot: "Cloth of frize is matched with cloth of gold"; a most royal witticism, by my halidom! and very soothing to the King's temper.

I thank Mr Knight for his information, but he has buttonholed me, and insists on reminding me that in the previous year, 1513, while Henry was laying siege to Tournay, was fought the battle of Flodden, wherein his brother-in-law, James IV. of Scotland, came by his death.

The Scots were ill neighbours in those days. Their Royal House of Stuart, barred by Henry from the succession, had not yet annexed England, uniting the two pugnacious nations in the bonds of holy matrimony. "The whirligig of time" had not yet "brought in his revenges." When, I wonder, will some Irish king, some O'Brien or O'Connor, follow

this excellent precedent, and amalgamate the three kingdoms in a vital union? Pending such fundamental settlement of the Irish difficulty, I see no prospect of a *Hibernia Pacata*.

But enough of this! Into what stubbles of information, and bog-holes of speculation, may the enquiring essayist be tempted who tarries to gossip with a popular historian!

One wonders what the village of Mortlake was like in the stirring times that brief inscription recalls. It has, at least, not undergone such complete transformation as that other "poor village called Brighthelmstone."

The High Street, with its mingled odours of new-baked bread and fried fish, still has something of the aspect of a village street, and there are many old houses in it, but nothing that specially caught my fancy and compelled me to linger. I turned down by the "Jolly Gardeners," a pleasantly imagined name, and not uncommon; though I do not remember ever meeting a gardener who was jolly. I once indeed came across a canny Scot of that mystery, who knew some German, and had read Heine. I asked him if he had ever seen that passionate Lotus-flower which is tormented by the sun, and only opens by moonlight; but he did not seem to be acquainted with the species. He smiled at my question, and may have relaxed further in his convivial hours.

There must be jolly grave-diggers; there are, or have been, three jolly threshers, if another sign I have seen is to be credited; we may hope then that there are, at some seasons, jolly gardeners. Thus as I mused I found myself in Ship Lane, and soon

came out once more upon the bank of the Thames, by "The Ship" itself.

From this onward, my walk became more solitary. There was not much traffic on this pathway, along which, as the sun was westering and the fog increasing, I could, in the mood of Milton's *Penseroso*, "walk unseen" with the "pensive nun" Melancholy, and "the cherub Contemplation." There was still a narrow alley leading darkly up to the High Street, through a grimy but picturesquely-irregular group of low houses and cottages with red-tiled roofs. I passed it by unexplored, and walked along the weedy river bank, where the rank grass and dissipated-looking docks bore marks of a recent high tide, which had left its tribute of river slime upon the weeds, and strown the path itself with a profusion of corks, feathers, and fragments of sedge, the customary jetsam of Father Thames in this part of his course.

Soon I came to an old wall, its weather-worn bricks glowing a deep red in the fog which smothered and absorbed a gorgeous sunset. It enclosed the grounds of a large modern "Queen Anne" house, with red-brick gables daintily framed in curved mouldings of cream-coloured stone, a good piece of late nineteenth-century work in the one architectural style that seems to have any real vitality nowadays. On the top of a square offset from the enclosing wall stood two great tubs of agapanthus. A few heads of azure flowers still bloomed forlornly among their withered and drooping companions, and, like a robin's song, seemed but to deepen and enrich the season's melancholy.

As I walked on, the sunset glow gradually faded and the mist grew chillier. Beneath the scrubby osiers of the bank the ebbing tide had left oozy spaces of mud, and to the roots and lower branches clung many an obscene thing. In the sombre light, in which afternoon yielded slowly to premature twilight, it was a place to dream of sordid murders or squalid suicides, with a luxurious yet shuddering and not altogether inhuman aloofness; as one a-bed might listen in dozing comfort of contrast, made poignant by a sense of the perilous chances of life, to the swelling and dying gusts of a storm.

I passed by weedy places where nettles, docks, burdocks, and coltsfoot with huge shield-like leaves, flourished over heaps of mud and gravel; and crossed what was once a country stream, but now a walled-in drain entering the Thames under an iron bridge; for man is a polluting as well as a devastating animal.

Occasionally a steam-tug came like a spectre out of the fog, with a train of barges behind, and vanished in the direction of the torpedo-boat factory, whence the ring of heavy hammers followed me from afar.

Presently I came upon an engineer superintending a gang of navvies working in a swampy puddle, with yellow bricks stacked in great heaps on either side. They were making a drain or over-flow channel for a large reservoir, dimly visible beyond. Near them were some elms, which looked like battered veterans in the fight of the conquered country with a sordid civilisation. The dragon of ugliness sprawls and ravins more broadly year by year over the fair fields of England; and St George, grown fat and lazy, has

become a promoter of companies for the scaly monster's exploitation, draws his dividends, and slaps his pockets.

But the English are not the only nation of crusading shopkeepers (for, whether they draw the long-bow against the wily Saracen, or shell Cretan insurgents, are they not still Crusaders?) St George patronised. His red-cross floated over the warehouses and banks of the much-trading Genoese, long before he was adopted by the English. This red-cross Richard Cœur de Lion, returning at last from the Third Crusade, blazoned on his own banner, in compliment to the Genoese, who had provided him with eight gallies for the transport of his troops to the Holy Land. Thus did this Saint, who—if Gibbon be not guilty of *scandalum magnatum*—was above all else a smart man of business, become naturalised in this country. But it does not do to look too curiously at the seamy side of a bit of symbolic bunting; and so “St George for merrie England!”

The only rural industry I noticed here was the cultivation of celery. There were great fields of it, some feet below the level of the river bank; the earth piled high about the plants, and trenches full of water between the rows.

Further on, some children were dancing and shouting around a fire of weeds on a bit of waste ground; careless of the “ruines of Time” and—

The ever whirling wheel
Of Change, the which all mortal things doth sway.

Just beyond the railway bridge, a boy was solemnly fishing. This pensive sport of angling hath in it a

rare fascination. It is indeed a kind of patient and solitary gambling, wherein a little skill and much time is staked against a vast deal of chance. Even the looker-on, who sees many a cast made and not a fish taken, is gradually drawn within the magic circle, of which "the fool at one end of the line" marks the centre, and "the worm at the other" the circumference. I have fooled away many idle moments in the subdued and second-hand excitement of watching an incomplete angler. I did so now ; but for all I know the boy went home fishless, yet with a tranquil hope of better luck in that golden to-morrow, which salves many a sore spot left by to-day in our tender self-esteem.

But now a denser fog, black with the smoke of London, swooped suddenly down, extinguishing the last glow of the sunset. Tall aspens gathered themselves out of it, like apparitions taking shape from the gloom itself. Whistlerish lights began to glimmer before me ; and in a moment I saw the spectral form of Kew Bridge, a gigantic shadow looming over the wan river.

My riverside walk was ended ; but though change has been busy with the places I then saw, it lives in my memory as I then saw it. The passing away of many things, hallowed by even a century or so of antiquity, and trodden down by the march of the hungry generations, seemed to harmonise with that melancholy October day. Decaying houses, ruined pleasaunces, deserted gardens, touch the imagination and trouble the soul sweetly, like elegies—" *Sunt lachrymae rerum !* "

AN ESSAY IN SEARCH OF A SUBJECT

THERE is much pensive pleasure to be got in sitting upon a stile in some country lane; where you can see, or imagine, that before you there are branching ways, alternative invitations to your feet to wander through field or wood, in places as yet unexplored. Wherefore, when His Oddship laid his commands on me to provide some odd trifle for the entertainment of the Brethren and their Guests this evening, being a lazy man with a desultory sense of duty, that was just what I did: I sauntered forth, and sat upon a stile—in Dreamland.

I sat there and mused, idly wondering what path would presently entice me further. Many subjects, I knew, were gambolling somewhere before me, just out of sight, like so many hares; each capable of furnishing material for a *hors d'œuvre* in the Feast of Reason. But the practical words of Mrs Glass came into my head, troubling my pleasant reverie: I must first *catch* one.

Just then Charles Lamb happened to come by; and with the grave matter-of-fact air of your confirmed punster, stuttered out the preposterous question: "Is—is that your own style you are sitting on—or—a Hobby Horse?"

Was ever man since the creation of the world interrupted in the getting of an idea by a question so absurd? He might as well have asked, like

Mistress Shandy, whether I had not *forgot to wind up the clock!* Now I trust I have not such an irritable intellect as possessed that philosophic faddist, Mr Shandy; whom, as you know, the very suspicion of a pun stung like a gadfly. I can take a pun in a friendly way, as I can take a pinch of snuff. Yet I confess this dismal ghost of a pun amazed me with its thin echoes of that robust and audacious one flung by the genial Humourist no less suddenly at the head of the dumbfoundered porter who carried a hare: "Is that your own hare—or a wig?"

Yet on reflexion I found that this whimsy of his was kindly meant. It was a device to set me going—to wind up my brain-clock, which in my indolence I had almost let run down. As the wheels went round I saw that the point of his lean joke was its very suggestion of that other immortal audacity of his. He had started a hare for me, kindled in me the joy of the chase, set my wits coursing after a *Subject*.

But what *was* the subject they were in chase of? For it seemed that more than one had got up. Was it the Philosophy of Puns? Whither might not such a subject lead me—to vanish at last, leaving me on the brink of some awful metaphysical abyss? For puns are a sort of mad playing upon words; and a madman's reason, driven like a tennis-ball from word to word in the sport of some insane logic, often sees a portentous significance in a pun. Hamlet was a recondite punster; and what was the end of his philosophising?

Yet a pun may be made the most pungent medium for the conveyance of a truth; as in that splendid

repartee of the Corsican Lady to Napoleon, who, when reminded by her that he had broken his promise to a kinsman of hers who had done him a service, said brutally : " The Corsicans are all a pack of liars." Her reply was : "*Non tutti*, Sire ; *ma Buona Parte*."

That was giving him the pun direct ; but there are many varieties. Here is a sample of the pun subtle, or by implication. William IV., walking unattended through the streets of Brighton, saw an acquaintance on the other side of the way, and in jovial sailor-fashion accosted him thus : " Ha, Hudson ! Is that you ? They tell me you are the biggest blackguard in Brighton." " I hope," said Hudson, " Your Majesty has not come here to deprive me of my character."

There is also the pun innocent, or unconscious. An English Barrister, with a tendency to drop his H's, had to examine an Irishwoman, who kept a lodging-house in a slum of Melbourne, in which there had been a difficulty between the Irish and the Chinamen.

" Your name is Mrs Dineen ? "

" Yes, sir, that's my name, so it is—an' I've no call to be ashamed of it."

" You keep a lodging-house for Chinamen, I think ? "

" Yes sir. Sure a poor lone woman must do *somethin'* for to get an honest penny."

" Well now, Mrs Dineen, may I ask you : Is it true that the Chinamen 'ate the Irish ? "

" Is it *ate* them, sir ? Aw *no*, sir ! I never seen wan o' them offer t' ate an Irishman, as long as I'm

in the place. Sure the sorra ha'porth them poor craythurs does ate, only a little bit o' rice."

But enough of puns, for a second subject crosses the trail. That pun of Lamb's about the hare was more than a pun, it was an Audacity of Genius.

The Audacities of Genius—what a run may not that subject give the indolent Essayist in search of one! I am not now chiefly thinking of your great men of action; your Nelson who, finding his ship dismasted and in danger of being blown out of the water, gets out of the scrape by laying himself alongside of his two big adversaries, and taking them by the board; your Nicholson, who, in the early days of the Indian Mutiny, when the *prestige* of England,

Like a clipt guinea trembled in the scale,

calmly receives the Indian Magnate come to his *Durbar* with shoes insolently on his feet; but sends him away with those shoes humbly in his hand. If it were not for such audacities of genius, leaping out on the spur of the moment, where would England be? It is not every nation that has learnt, like our Japanese friends, to subordinate audacity to forethought. But:

Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than war.

and even in the domain of literature a well-wielded audacity may secure a permanent victory, as even mere bluff a temporary one. Is there not a fine audacity in those Odd Volumes of a certain mad

Parson, with a face like that of a Faun, kidnapped from his native woods and clapt into the enchanted prison of a cassock—that Parson who called himself Yorick, and adopted Hamlet's words as his epitaph?

But he had audacious fellows for his forbears. Is not genius itself an audacity of temperament, imagination, personality—what you will? . . . And please observe that when, in the course of this my Essay, I ask myself a question, it is a sign that I have heard the rustling of a subject, or seen one stealing away.

For Sterne himself, if I were to take *him* for a hare, and yelp after him like a beagle, I might find my critical muzzle tackled by a hedgehog.

There is audacity enough, and genius enough, in those "Lesser and Greater Testaments" of François Villon, perhaps the greatest of the lyrical poets of France, of whom Théodore de Banville has said:

Entre les fous aïeux de Rabelais
Vous en pouviez, je crois choisir un pire.

What a gift of song was given to this scapegrace gallows-bird, born in the very year, 1431, in which, as he says in his *Ballad of Old Time Ladies*:

Joan the maid,
The good Lorrainer, the English bare
Captive to Rouen and burnt her there.

What a splendid genius this man had, what vivid power of presentment, what satiric humour, what ribald cynicism, what wit, what pathos, what a robust, yet delicately-handled style—in which, how-

ever coarse be the subject he treats, there is yet an aroma of gentle breeding! And what strange suggestions there are in his work of religious feeling, springing up from some hidden deep in his soul, as in that Ballade given to his Mother, "wherewithal to do her Homage to our Lady!" Here are a couple of stanzas of it, in John Payne's excellent translation.

Lady of Heaven, Regent of the earth,
 Empress of all the marish-pools of Hell,
 Receive me, Thy poor Christian, nothing worth,
 In the fair midst of Thine elect to dwell:
 Albeit my lack of grace I know full well;
 For that Thy grace, my Lady and my Queen,
 Aboundeth more than all my sins, I ween,
 Withouten which no soul of all that sigh
 May merit Heaven. So God may make me clean,
 In this belief I will to live and die.

Say to thy Son I am His—that by his birth
 And death my sins may be redeemable,—
 As Mary of Egypt's dole was turned to mirth,
 And eke Theophilus', of whom men tell
 He was by Thee absolved, albeit to Hell
 The poor clerk's soul had long contracted been.
 Assoilzie me, that I may have no teen,
 Maid, that without breach of virginity
 Didst bear our Lord that in the Host is seen.
 In this belief I will to live and die.

Possibly in the lines about "the poor clerk" Theophilus there may be an indirect allusion to himself. Villon was the Morning Star of the early French Renaissance, and its unregulated forces found a voice in him.

Rabelais veiled his audacity under the hood of the charlatan who exposes his strange wares in the market-place ; for genius itself will sometimes stoop to revel it in what seems sheer charlatanry, as does this satirist of abuses in Church and State, with his *gros rire* of coarse rollicking humour ; so different from the refined mockery of Voltaire.

Man, the laughing animal, laughs in many different keys ; and the laughter of the humourist keeps a memory of the tears in which it has been baptized. There is something pathetic surely in the grinning of mankind over a filthy joke, and in Rabelais this pathos assumes as gigantic proportions as the tears of Gargantua. The *cloaca maxima* of human nature seems to discharge itself into the river of his eloquence.

“Exuberance is beauty” was one of Blake’s aphorisms ; but the full-blooded extravagance of language in which Rabelais clothes his ideas, exhausting the dictionary of its dunghill terms to furnish the hotbed wherein his flowers of rhetoric so rankly flourish, is often too robustious to be beautiful. His luxuriance astonishes more than it delights ; and it tends to induce weariness. Only the broad smile of self-confident good humour, and the genial zest, with which this Silenus of Satirists welcomes you to his Gargantuan feast makes its coarse profusion tolerable. But after all you can cut and come again ; there is Attic salt to season it withal, and flasks of curious vintage wherewith to wash it down.

In his handling of things obscene Swift is at the opposite pole from Rabelais. He does not revel in boisterous horse-play merely for the amusement of

himself and his reader. His *sæva indignatio* against the Yahoo, man—his very hatred of the filth wherein he wallows, made him peer into the dark cavern of man's lower nature with a loathing fascination ; sometimes scavenging its contents, and flinging them in his face in a cynical rage. He had always before him the flaw in his own brain, lurking there to extinguish his genius at last. That picture of the tree dying at the top was always in an inner chamber of his imagination, and he plunged into the battle of politics that he might forget his weakness by proving his masterful power over men.

From Rabelais our later humourist, Sterne, stole certain mountebank tricks, as from his contemporary, Rousseau, a note of sentimental tenderness, to be transfigured in that rare and fluent style of his, so delicate in its fantastic charm and wilfulness. Like Shakespeare, he had made Montaigne's acquaintance ; and his wide knowledge of old authors recalls the wealth of that treasure-house of learning, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. But his Book of books was *Don Quixote*, and in the intimate relationship between Captain Shandy and Corporal Trim we are reminded of that between the gentle Knight of La Mancha and his faithful squire Sancho Panza.

What a bore would this Parson Yorick be, with his erratic narrative, if it were not so interesting ! And what roguish devices he has to secure his reader's attention ! What a book is that *Tristram Shandy* of his, in which he ambles and skips about upon his own Hobby-Horse—much as the Knight upon the chess-board proceeds by oblique motion, with that curious potency of leaping sideways or backwards.

Like him Sterne can manage to light upon every square of the board by dexterous play.

Here is a book for the leisurely reader, who is not altogether incapable of thinking, to stray in and meditate upon ; like many of those old-world books which can get over the road slowly, without being therefore tedious. But what reader, save an odd one, has leisure for such books nowadays ? In these hurrying times when life speeds by us like a series of dissolving views, caught in snap-shot impressions, we bolt the stories with which Mudie so copiously supplies us, and skip the author's pet passages—and we often forget the book that has given us a couple of hours' distraction. But Sterne's daintily sketched characters, appearing and disappearing in the whimsical mazes of his narrative, haunt our memory and live in our imagination. By what magic is this effected ?

So far I had got in my chase of a subject when a Ukase from His Oddship, aimed with the accuracy of a Japanese shell, burst upon me. Its object was to drive me from my position, and compel me to produce a scientific treatise on *Tristram Shandy*—on pain of death. The terror of it was enough to dissipate all those animal spirits that should go hand in hand with the Homunculus, which was in the act of begetting an Essay. Here was a subject evasive enough to keep me in chase of it for a year. Why a page or two of that astounding book would have supplied me with matter enough for a whole Odd Volume session ! I should have given up the ghost, or at least the chase, had I not known that in a single incident and its treatment the very spirit of the whole

might be discerned by the judicious reader. I therefore opened the first volume, and took the Virgilian Lot it gave me.

I happened upon the very moment when Tristram began to give signs that he was about to be born. This, as you all remember, comes just after that very subtle disquisition upon the gradual growth of Uncle Toby's Hobby-Horse, which obsesses him like a nightmare, to the neglect and exacerbation of his wound, until Corporal Trim, whose name on the roll, as you know, was James Butler, by the sheer force of his sympathetic genius inserts a new *idea* into the mind of his Master—a *practical* idea, which transforms the said Hobby-Horse from a puzzle and perplexity, a thing of mere maps and mathematics, a thing riding upon Uncle Toby's brain, into a Magic Steed that shall carry Master and Man careering over the green sward of Shandy Hall; whereon, with grassy sods for outworks, curtains, and bastions, and the jack-boots worn by Sir Roger Shandy at Marston Moor for mortars, the whole history of the War in Flanders may be played out according to all the rules of military art.

Now you will remember that while Tristram is making up his mind to sneak into this world of conflicting humours, and while Mr Shandy and his brother Toby are sitting in the parlour at opposite sides of the fire-place, passing the momentous moments in discoursing upon "the nature of women," Dr Slop enters, covered with mud from his encounter with Obadiah; who, sent post-haste to summon him, canons with the coach-horse against his pony, and overturns his four-and-a-half-feet of stature with its

appended "breadth of back and sesquipedality of belly," into the miry road. You will remember what a spur his sudden advent gives to the Hobby-Horse of Uncle Toby, and the crotchets of Mr Shandy, a man of too dry and irritable intellect to construct for himself a single well-shaped and comfortable Hobby-Horse, from whose back he could tilt victoriously against all the ills of life—like another Tam o' Shanter, "glorious" on his grey mare.

"Your sudden and unexpected arrival," quoth my Uncle Toby, addressing himself to Dr Slop, "instantly brought the great Stevinus into my head, who, you must know, is a favourite author with me."

"Then," added my father, "I will lay twenty guineas to a single crown-piece that this Stevinus was some engineer or other, or has wrote something or other, either directly or indirectly upon the science of fortification."

"He has so," replied my Uncle Toby.

"I knew it," said my father, "though for the soul of me, I cannot see what kind of connection there can be between Dr Slop's sudden coming, and a discourse upon fortification; yet I fear'd it. Talk of what we will, brother—or let the occasion be never so foreign or unfit for the subject—you are sure to bring it in. I would not, brother Toby," continued my father, "I declare I would not have my head so full of curtains and horn-works"—

"That I dare say you would not," quoth Dr Slop, interrupting him, and laughing most immoderately at his pun.

Here we have the scene fairly in swing. Every man is in his humour: Mr Shandy's irritability

increased by the buzzing of the pun by inuendo, and Uncle Toby set careering on his Hobby-Horse, until his brother's testiness breaks out, and he pours his scorn upon the gambols of that prancing beast.

"So full is your head of these confounded works, that though my wife is this moment in the pains of labour, and you hear her cry out, yet nothing will serve you but to carry off the man-midwife."

"*Accoucheur*, if you please," quoth Dr Slop.

"With all my heart," replied my father, "I don't care what they call you;—but I wish the science of fortification, with all its inventors, at the devil;—it has been the death of thousands, and will be mine in the end."

Then follows that parenthetic aside of the author with the episode of Uncle Toby and the fly.

"Go"—says he, one day at dinner, to an overgrown one which had buzzed about his nose, and tormented him cruelly all dinner-time—and which, after infinite attempts, he had caught at last—as it flew by him;—"I'll not hurt thee," says my uncle Toby, rising from his chair, and going across the room with the fly in his hand—"I'll not hurt a hair of thy head:—Go," says he, lifting up the sash to let it escape;—"go, poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee?—This world is surely wide enough to hold thee and me."

The scene ends thus :

"I need not tell the reader, if he keeps a Hobby-Horse—that a man's Hobby-Horse is as tender a part as he has about him; and that these unprovoked strokes at my uncle Toby's could not be unfelt by

him—No ;—as I said above, my uncle Toby did feel them, and very sensibly too.”

“ Pray, Sir, what said he ?—How did he behave ? ”

—“ O, Sir !—it was great ; for as soon as my father had done insulting his Hobby-Horse—he turned his head, without the least emotion, from Dr Slop, to whom he was addressing his discourse, and looking up into my father’s face, with a countenance spread over with so much good nature ;—so placid—so fraternal ;—so inexpressibly tender to him ;—it penetrated my father to his heart. He rose up hastily from his chair, and seizing hold of both my uncle Toby’s hands as he spoke :—“ Brother Toby,” said he :—“ I beg thy pardon ;—forgive, I pray thee, this rash humour which my mother gave me.”

“ My dear, dear brother,” answered my uncle Toby, rising up by my father’s help, “ say no more about it ;—you are heartily welcome, had it been ten times as much, brother.”

“ But ’tis ungenerous,” replied my father, “ to hurt any man ;—a brother worse ;—but to hurt a brother of such gentle manners—so unprovoking—and so unresentful ;—’tis base :—By Heaven, ’tis cowardly.”

“ You are heartily welcome, brother,” quoth my uncle Toby—“ had it been fifty times as much.”

“ Besides, what have I to do, my dear Toby,” cried my father, “ either with your amusements or your pleasures, unless it was in my power (which it is not) to increase their measure ? ”

“ Brother Shandy,” answered my uncle Toby, looking wistfully in his face—“ you are much mistaken

in this point ;—for you do increase my pleasure very much, in begetting children for the Shandy family at your time of life.”

“ But by that, Sir,” quoth Dr Slop, “ Mr Shandy increases his own.”

“—Not a jot,” quoth my father.”

Chapter XIII. is a short one, containing only the following bit of dialogue, which briefly epitomizes this Comedy of Humours.

“ My brother does it,” quoth my uncle Toby, “ out of principle.”

“ In a family way, I suppose,” quoth Dr Slop.

“ Pshaw !” said my father—“ ’tis not worth talking of.”

In Chapter XXVII. of the next Book, we hear of the damage done to Trismegistus’s nose by Dr Slop’s meddlesome forceps ; and in Chapter XIV. of the succeeding one the ill-omened name, Tristram, is by another accident aspersed upon him.

Your Oddship will remember that clause in Mistress Shandy’s Marriage Settlement which takes up some three and three-quarter pages of legal language, the gist of which is thus given : “ In three words, my mother was to lie in, if she chose, in London.” But Nemesis has her jade’s tricks of grim humour in this world of mice and men ; and in the miscarriage of Tristram’s nose and name he vicariously pays the penalty of his father’s cantankerous enforcement of another (qualifying) clause, said to have been introduced by Uncle Toby—no doubt to protect his brother against female wiles ; the effect of which was, in *four* words : That, should Mistress Shandy at any time go up to London on a false alarm, she should

forfeit her aforesaid right in her next-following pregnancy, and lie in at home.

Hence the tragic intervention of Dr Slop's forceps, which served *him* for a Hobby-Horse—hence also that slip of Susannah's tongue in carrying the name Trismegistus the length of the corridor, from Mr Shandy's room where he lay, collapsed by the calamity of the Nose.

" 'Tis Tris-something,"—cried Susannah—"There is no christian name in the world," said the curate, "beginning with Tris—," but Tristram.—"Then 'tis Tristram-gistus," quoth Susannah.

"—There is no gistus to it, noodle!—'tis my own name," replied the curate, dipping his hand, as he spoke, into the bason."

In these scenes, from which I have filtered off some extractive matter, I say we have a fair specimen of the genius of Sterne. And now, what would you have me do with it? Shall I make you a qualitative and quantative analysis of its elements—*item*, so much fine observation, *item*, so much whimsicality, pathos, satiric tenderness, sympathy for the foibles of human nature? Why I might say as many foolish things about *Tristram Shandy* as the Commentators about Shakespeare's Plays—to say nothing of his Sonnets; and how much wiser or happier should we all be for my pains? And besides my animal spirits, as I told you, have received a shock. In fact I am not in the humour for such a task.

Sterne's genius, my Brethren, is like *Radium*; his matter is radiant matter, and a very small quantity of it is enough to produce marvellous effects by its restless bombardment of that phosphorescent

substance, the human brain. Perhaps on some future occasion, nearer the Greek Kalends, I may succeed in obtaining a larger portion for analysis; but to-night I fight shy of the labour.

This Essay of mine is a terrible thing to have essayed. I started in search of a subject, and now I have lost count of the subjects I have started. I see now that it is, or ought to be, a contrapuntal Essay, and many of the themes are still undeveloped. I must endeavour to combine them into a *finale*, with a graceful *coda*, and somehow before midnight bring it to a close in the tonic.

It would take all Sterne's genius to work it into a really fine piece of counterpoint, and end in triumph. For that *Tristram Shandy*, from which I have stolen a *motif*, is the work of a great contrapuntist, in his simultaneous handling of related subjects. As he says himself: "In a word, my work is digressive and progressive at the same time." There is a logical sequence of ideas from the first chapter to the end of this "Cock and Bull story," which ends with a restoration of confidence in the Parish Bull. But Sterne's logic is not that of the logicians, with their progression in one dimension of matter, through syllogisms in *Barbara*, *Celarent*, etc. It is the radiant logic of the imagination which works in a thousand directions at once, in a flash of intuition; and illuminates the trifles of life till they become symbols of the pathetic humours of human nature.

Compare Sterne's commentaries upon his characters with Thackeray's. Thackeray, as we know, was "a Titan of mind," as Charlotte Brontë discovered—a man of genius too. But how his lum-

bering titanic intellect gets in the way of his genius, in his parochial sermons upon the dallying of his puppets! How *banal* they all seem after a page of Sterne; how paltry after that great discourse of Yorick upon Conscience!

Tristram Shandy is, among other things, an Essay upon the proper spirit and conditions in which the breeding of mankind should be undertaken; how far primitive instinct should be regulated by reason, and so forth—a subject scarcely less important than that of the breeding of cattle, symbolised by Obadiah's cow. But possibly there is a touch of morbidity in Sterne's so frequent use of his curious method of philosophising by indecent suggestion. The book is also a treatise on the delights and dangers of excursions on the Hobby-Horse, and is itself an example of both. It is moreover a subtle critique upon the motives of human action. It is above all, as I have said before, a Comedy of Humours, which holds the mirror up to nature.

At the end we are left with a hope that the union between Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman, who must serve him instead of that galaxy of beauties, his Brother—had he happened to be an Asiatic Monarch, instead of a retired Turkey Merchant—would have selected for him to breed from—we are left, I say, with a hope that this union, if it ever came fairly off, may have had a better issue than Tristram, the fruit of that Shandean philosophy, which reasoned of many things, and effected little; even the cure of a creaking hinge.

I take, for the principal theme of my *Finale*, that other strange Book to which I made a casual allusion,

as a prelude to its introduction, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Wherein lies the perennial charm of such a rhapsody as this? It is almost as fantastic in its exuberance and in its handling of materials as *Tristram Shandy* itself; and the *Life and Opinions* of that gentle Humanist and erudite scholar, Robert Burton, in which his richly-attired sibylline melancholy broods over grave conceptions of men and things, is a possession for all posterity. I have somewhere read in the Spanish tongue, but where I forget, an anecdote which in plain English may be thus rendered:

Two travellers were going along a road—in Spain, let us say—that Spain noted for its castles—and found by the wayside a stone with the inscription:

*Here lies buried
the Soul
of the Licentiate, Don So-and-so.*

“How can a man’s soul be buried under a stone?” said one, and went upon his way. The other paused and pondered, determined to solve the problem by practical experiment, fetched a wrenching iron, and raised the stone; under which he found a bag of gold coins.

In that work of his lifetime lies interred the soul of old Burton, or at least the treasures it amassed in its buccaneering among books. But they are daintily arranged and exhibited; not as in a museum, nor in the haphazard way in which fragments of antiquity—the marred face, fractured limb, or detached torso of an old statue—were built into the brickwork of

those walls which used to exist in the vicinity of Rome before it became a modern capital. Burton is a fine jeweller who sets the antique gems he has collected in the gold of his quaint and racy style, in which, thinking aloud, his soul seems to hold converse with itself, like a hermit from his mountain cell gazing down on the follies and vanities of an insane world ; laughing bitterly, with tears in his heart, at the amazing spectacle. " Never so much cause of laughter as now," he says, " never so many fools and madmen. 'Tis not one Democritus will serve our turn to laugh in these days ; we have now need of a *Democritus to laugh at Democritus*, one jester to flout at another, one fool to flee at another : a great *Stentorian Democritus* as big as that *Rhodian Colossus*. For now, as Sarisburiensis said in his time, *totus mundis histrionem agit*, the whole world plays the fool ; we have a new theatre, a new scene, a new Comedy of Errors, a new company of passionate actors ; *Volupiae sacra*, the rites of the Goddess of Pleasure (as Calcaginus wittily feigns in his Apologues) are celebrated all the world over, where all the actors were madmen and fools, and every hour changed habits, or took that which came next."

So he preludes his diatribe against war and its horrors, in which men, driven by lust after pleasure and dominion, become possest by what he calls " a feral hatred " against their neighbours, until even Christian takes up arms against Christian in the sacred name of religion, and the priest becomes a demon, hounding men on to persecution and carnage, for the glory of God and the love of Christ.

Is the world much better now, when we ask

drearily: "Who sets the scene and maintains the actors, and who are the audience who understand and enjoy the plot of this Divine Comedy, or farcical tragedy?" Who is "He that hath made us, and not we ourselves"? Is he the God of Darwin, that Demiurgus, urging the world recklessly forward along the path of evolution, through æons of tentative experiment and bungling advance, that the fittest may finally survive—if his experiment should haply not fail? Or is there possibly some finer spiritual alchemy working in the still chaotic elements of the seething crucible of the universe?

But these are thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls; let us get back to literature: that store of honey which survives the tragic struggle and wreck of lives in the busy human hive. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is not a mere anthology of quotations. Like Goethe, like Sterne, Burton has sown the seed of many a vegetative thought. Read him continuously, or dip into him here and there, and he sends you on your way with a murmuring sound of cadenced words in your ear—words which sing to the music of a pensive spirit, and awaken more than vague reveries.

Burton has ransacked antiquity for quotations; decking out the rich brocade of his text with as many jewels as shine upon one of Elizabeth's gowns in her portraits. The profusion may be excessive; yet how often does the jewel set off the beauty of the stuff, and the stuff enhance the lustre of the jewel. It is strange how a phrase taken from its context, a line or a stanza from a poem, seems to become more vividly significant, to live with a new life of its

own, when set in another man's work as a quotation. Sometimes even a whole poem you know well in its place in the author's pages may acquire a new distinction when you happen on it in an anthology. Many of Burton's jewels, like some of our familiar quotations, are taken from old books that slumber on dusty shelves beneath "Oblivion's Poppy"; books whose authors thus live in the survival of a line or two, and all the rest forgotten. The dullest of us may, once in a while, say a good thing, which someone may perchance find and rescue from the world's waste-paper basket, wherein many things as good sleep for ever.

In literature our sense of greatness depends little on bulk—much on quality. A part may even be greater than the whole; which moral these lines of Ben Jonson point, and of which they are themselves an example. Here is a perfect poem, in a single strophe taken from a long Pindaric Ode, in which it was set by the Poet, like a gem in mere metal.

It is not growing like a tree
 In bulk doth make men better be;
 Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
 To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
 A lily of a day
 Is fairer far in May,
 Although it fall and die that night;
 It was the plant and flower of light.
 In small proportions we just beauties see;
 And in short measures, life may perfect be.

What then is the quality of potency by which a book, a poem, a stanza, a sentence, lives and abides

in the memory of mankind with an enduring freshness? Many books convey useful information; but the information grows stale, and the book withers and dies. It is not merely the thought, but the manner of its expression; not merely the thing said but the way in which it is said, that charms us in literature. It is a man's imagination—that orchestral music of his whole personality, out of which the thought flies to us on the wings of emotion in his uttered words, which sets our own imagination vibrating, and rouses or delights us.

Here then is the secret of that evasive thing called *style*, which vitalises the printed page, and gives to each word in a sequence of words a mysterious sense, a whole kaleidoscope of meanings not in the dictionary; because it has become a note in the spiritual music. Style can reanimate what you took for a platitude, and make it fresh as a new-born primrose. Style is that subtle counterpoint of which I spoke, in which all themes are combined, all discords resolved, and the piece moves gaily or solemnly to a harmonious close.

That was a philosophic pun with which the Gentle Master startled me from my seat.

And now let me frankly confess that of all the subjects I have strolled after I have not caught one. That "*Hors d'Œuvre*" must be cancelled on the *Menu*.

But what of that? Would you have me run a subject to death? I protest, by the beard of his Oddship, I have not the heart for such butcherly sport! I prefer to watch my themes gambolling about me in the fields of Dreamland, as they have

AN ESSAY IN SEARCH OF A SUBJECT III

been doing ; for I have come to love them, as Cowper his tame hares.

Have I then made you “ feed o’ the chameleon’s dish, promise crammed ” ? Be thankful for that ! Better are the blossoms of promise than the sour apples of performance. I leave you the promise of May, with whom I make my exit hand in hand, and you are now welcome to sit upon my style, or that of any other man riper and richer in performance ; or to career upon your own Hobby-Horses.

And so ;
God preserve His Oddship,
and grant him a prosperous Reign,
Wisheth his Well-Wisher
THE PLAYWRIGHT

MURMURS FROM THE *HESPERIDES*

THE *Hesperides* of that most dainty of English rhymers, Robert Herrick, is a companionable book. No churlish dragon keeps watch in this garden, where pleasant poems for all seasons grow as thickly as daisies in a meadow.

Herrick's life of eighty-three years extends over a momentous period of English history. He was a boy when Elizabeth dropped the sceptre she had wielded in characteristically Elizabethan fashion, and James Stuart annexed the kingdom and crown she had so jealously defended against his mother. He saw the incoming of the Stuarts, their outgoing at the death of that most picturesque of kings, Charles I., and having outlived the Commonwealth and Protectorate he saw their "blessed Restoration" in the person of Charles II., whose birth he had sung.

In literature he bridges over that period of change between Elizabeth and Anne. Shakespeare was twenty-seven when Herrick was born in Cheapside in 1591, and at Shakespeare's death in 1616 Herrick twenty-five. Milton, his junior by seventeen years, died in 1674, the year of Herrick's death. Dryden was then forty-three, Swift seven, Addison two, and Steele was born the next year, 1675.

The author of *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers* was no time-serving Vicar of Bray. He stuck to his Royalist colours, and experienced the changing

fortunes of his party. He had more moral and political backbone than his contemporaries, Dryden and Waller. A better literary artist than either, he was man first, and poet after. There is strong character in every line of that portrait of him prefixed to the first edition of *Hesperides*, with its suggestion of the bust of a Roman Emperor; bare-chested, bull-necked, the massive head with hair profusely curling, the powerful jaws clean-shaven, the chin with a fleshy dewlap beneath it. He looks indeed like a latter-day Roman who had assumed the cassock instead of the purple; and his beak-like nose is worthy of Ovidius Naso himself. The general expression of the face is that of a genial Bacchic sensuousness, as far removed from sordid sensuality as from asceticism. It is a face which recalls Browning's rich lines about Sordello; for it is that of a man

Of that regal class
Nature has broadly severed from the mass
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
Some happy lands that have luxurious names
For loose fertility.

Why did Herrick never quite fulfil the promise of his face? Where we might expect from him passion, imagination, spontaneous bird-notes of song, he too often gives us but shallow sentiment, fanciful conceits, graceful and ingenious versification. Was it that he came too late to feel the exuberance of life of the Elizabethan period; that poetry was becoming less instinctive, more academic and self-conscious, seeking for more perfect form in the cup

that was to hold the *vinum dæmonum*, rather than the perfect vintage of the wine itself? But why ask this? Which of us fulfils the promises Life makes to us, and in us? It is one of the mysteries of that niggardly wastrel, Nature, that even men of genius so seldom attain their full stature. Let us rather wonder at the things which, stunted and baffled as we are, we achieve—wonder specially at the richness of *Hesperides*, where you may gather so many beautiful flowers with the immortal dew upon them, and come again and yet again for another bunch. To have written but half-a-dozen poems as exquisite as many here would have crowned their author with unfading bays.

There is no chronological order in the poems of the *Hesperides*. Time himself has gone to sleep there, his unwhetted scythe marking eternal noon on the sundial. Yet we may connect many of them with definite periods of Herrick's life. When, after his father's death, his mother retired with her children to Hampton-on-Thames, he seems to have had a happy time. In his *Teares to Thamasis*, he speaks with affection of the haunts of his childhood :

No more shall I along thy chrystal glide
In barge (with boughs and rushes beautified)
With the smooth Virgins (for our chaste disport)
To Richmond, Kingston and to Hampton Court.

He also mentions his old school "Beloved Westminster" and his birthplace "Golden Cheapside." There is a fine air of adult style about this boyish poem.

Having tried commerce for a while, he went to

Cambridge, taking his degree in 1620. Then, in his twenty-ninth year he came to London, where he was "sealed of the tribe of Ben," and became one of his "Sons" as his *Ode for Him* recalls. Shakespeare and Beaumont were then dead; but Fletcher, Massinger and others still clustered about Ben Jonson, though not at the "Mermaid," which Herrick never mentions. It was not until 1629, when he was thirty-eight, that he took Holy Orders. He must then have had a considerable reputation as a poet, as many of his poems, not always the best, were set to music by the most noted composers of the day: Ramsey, Lawes, Lanieri and Wilson. Still he does not seem to have been satisfied with his present fame; for he reiterates his claim to immortality and rails at his critics in a shoal of epigrams and poems. Take this as a specimen:

I ask't thee oft what Poets thou hast read,
And lik'st the best? Still thou reply'st, The Dead.
I shall, ere long, with green turfs covered be;
Then sure thou'lt like, or thou wilt envie me.

From *His Poetrie his Pillar* I quote the last two stanzas:

Behold this living Stone
I reare for me,
Ne'er to be thrown
Downe, envious Time, by thee.

Pillars let some set up
(If so they please)
Here is my hope
And my Pyramides.

It is pleasant to think that his hope was not a vain one.

It may be asked how the poet of *Hesperides* who has been called a Pagan, and who celebrated not only Bacchus and Venus, but other members of the Pantheon including the Muses, and who was inspired by the classical spirit of delight in beauty, and the joy of living, came to take Holy Orders. To this we may reply that even in his most Pagan period he was haunted, as the lyrical poets of Greece and Rome were, by a sense of the transitoriness of all mortal things, and the certainty of death. But now a graver mood seems to have come upon him. He did not enter the Priesthood merely as a means of livelihood, as he tells us in his *Farewel unto Poetrie*.

'Tis not need
(That scarecrow unto mankynde) that doth breed
Wiser conclusions in me.

Possibly a more serious love than any he sang in celebrating his many "Mistresses" may have had some effect upon his mind. There are a few poems which breathe a deeper note of passion than most of his lines to these ladies; as for instance this *Upon Parting*:

Goe hence away, and in thy parting know
'Tis not my voice but Heaven's that bids thee goe;
Spring hence thy faith, nor think it ill desert
I finde in thee, that makes me thus to part.

The song, *His Mistres to him at his Farwell* is possibly a reply to this put into the mouth of the unknown lady.

Herrick has many times exprest his distaste for marriage, as in his *Answer to a Question*, which thus concludes :

What man would be here
 Slave to thrall
 If at all
 He could live free here ?

He never did marry, but as he sings "lived chaste" in his Vicarage with his housekeeper Prudence Baldwin, and his spaniel "Tracie." To his "Maid Prew" he addressed some charming little poems ; one on her kindness in not leaving him in his old age like those "summer Birds," his fairweather friends ; another on her sickness, and finally this epitaph :

In this little Urne is laid
 Prewdence Baldwin (once my Maid)
 From whose happy spark here let
 Spring the purple Violet.

On taking orders he was presented to the living of Dean Prior, in Devonshire, where he regarded himself as banished from intellectual society, and quite out of the world. In more than one poem he expresses his disgust at his isolation, as in the lines *To his Household Gods* which thus concludes :

Search worlds of Ice ; and rather there
 Dwell, than in loathéd Devonshire.

Here, however, he wrote many poems, both sacred

and secular, and has the grace to confess in these ungrammatical lines :

Yet justly too, I must confesse
I ne'er invented such
Ennobled numbers for the Presse
Than where I loath'd so much.

He gradually settled down, and celebrated the delights of country life in many charming poems. He even came to take a melancholy pleasure in solitude.

HIS WISH TO PRIVACIE

Give me a cell
To dwell
Where no foot hath
A path :
There will I spend
And end
My wearied years
In teares.

He did not lose touch with London and the Court, to which he became an unofficial Laureate, presenting to King Charles poems on the birth of Princes Charles and James, which were set to music by the Court musicians. Of his quiet clerical life in Devonshire little is known. He is said by Antony-a-Wood to have written "florid and witty" discourses, and to have been "beloved by the neighbouring gentry." Dr Grosart, moreover, tells us of a "late tradition" that "he one day threw his sermon at his congregation, cursing them for their inattention." There

was probably no more harm in this patriarchal curse than in Uncle Toby's oath. He interpreted his dedication of himself to be a "Priest of the Most High God" in a genial and human sense without Puritanic sourness.

In the dark days of the contest between King and Commons, though true to the Royal cause, he faithfully uttered in verse many indignant but manly and dignified remonstrances against Charles's tyranny and folly in dealing with his subjects; and he never indulged in the vulgar satire upon the Puritans current among Royalist writers.

In 1647 he was held by the Lord Protector, or his agents, to be a traitor to the Commonwealth and a malignant follower of "the Man Charles Stuart" and was ejected from his living. He calmly accepted the situation, and even rejoiced in the termination of his exile and return to London; where in the same year he published his *Hesperides*, dropping the clerical title with which some of the poems accorded ill, and styling himself plain Robert Herrick Esquire. At the Restoration there was another summary ejection, this time of the Puritans, and Herrick returned to Dean Prior in his seventy-first year. Here he died in October, 1674, some three months after his eighty-third birthday. He was buried in the churchyard of Dean Church, one of the three hamlets included in his parish, two lines from *Hesperides* forming his fitting epitaph:

Our mortal parts may wrapt in seare-clothes lye,
Great spirits never with their Bodies die.

So much for the events of Herrick's life as reflected

in his poems. It is pleasanter to wander at one's own sweet will in the groves and fields of the *Hesperides* than merely to pick out a few autobiographic lines here and there. Let us begin with *Mattens*, which seems to contradict what I have said about its being always noon in the garden. But when Time goes to sleep it is just as much morning as afternoon or evening ; each season or time of day is a mood of imagination, to be enjoyed when we please. Here is *Mattens* :

When with the Virgin Morning thou dost rise
 Crossing thy selfe ; come thus to sacrifice :
 First wash thy heart in innocence, then bring
 Pure hands, pure habits, pure, pure everything.
 Next to the Altar humbly kneele, and thence,
 Give up thy soul in clouds of frankinsence,
 Thy golden Censors filled with odours sweet
 Shall make thine actions with their ends to meet.

That is full of the very spirit of morning, a clean, healthy and cheerful reverence—a spiritualised sensuousness, glad with the energy of purity. "It helps us to understand what Herrick means by "a cleanly wantonnesse," that is to say gaiety or gleefulness, his own *Argument to his Book*, in which he touches both poles of his nature, the grave and gay, and the fair country that lay between. He begins :

I sing of Brooks, of Blossoms, Birds and Bowers,

I write of Youth, of Love and have Accesses
 By these, to sing of cleanly-Wantonnesse.

He ends :

I write of *Hell* ; I sing (and ever shall)
Of *Heaven*, and hope to have it after all.

And in his address *To his Muse* he woos her in rustic fashion, on the pastoral pipe.

Whither, Mad Maiden, wilt thou roam ?
Farre safer 'twere to stay at home
Where thou may'st sit and piping please
The poore and private cottages ;

Contempt in Courts and Cities dwell,
No *Critick* haunts the Poor man's cell.

He was an artist in verse, keeping his poems by him, and repolishing them until they approached his ideal of perfection. As he says :

Let's strive to be the best ; the Gods, we know it
Pillars and men, hate an indifferent Poet.

And here in *His Request to Julia* :

Julia, if I chance to die
Ere I print my Poetry
I most humbly thee desire
To commit it to the fire :
Better 'twere my Book were dead
Than to live not perfected.

In *Hesperides* Herrick, like Heine in his *Book of Songs*, rings many beautiful changes upon a few themes, and in him as in Heine there is a spice of cynicism as well as an undertone of melancholy ; but Herrick's cynicism is less bitter and habitual, his melancholy less fantastically exprest, and his

imagination remains in closer companionship with his common sense. In his simpler and saner personality there is less of that constant interplay between the contradictory elements than we find in Heine's. The expression of his emotion is more in harmony with his intellect than it is in some of those poems of Heine in which Mephistopheles seems to stand mockingly at Faust's elbow. Yet he is less spontaneous as a singer, not merely than Heine, but than many of the Elizabethans. His lyrics usually lend themselves to music rather than set the fountain of music flowing and singing in the composer's brain. Take any of Shakespeare's songs, a few of Ben Jonson's, many of those by the poets of their day, and compare them with Herrick's, and you feel a subtle difference: his are less simple in emotional expression, more calculated. Yet at his best he is a most exquisite song-writer, with a tender and delicate fancy which gives him his rare distinction of style, and marks him as master of his craft. The *Nightpiece to Julia* beginning "Her eyes the Glow-worm lend thee" is as perfect as possible for musical treatment; and *Gather ye Rosebuds while ye may*, though less daintily original, is a genuine song, as is also the charming *To Anthea*.

There are a few poems on Music, which he passionately loved; some of great beauty.

TO MUSICK. A SONG

Musick, thou Qween of Heaven, Care-charming spel,
That strik'st a stillnesse into Hell:
Thou that tame'st Tygers, and fierce storms (that rise)
With thy soul-melting Lullabies:

Fall down, down, down, from those thy chiming spheres,
To charm our soules, as thou enchant'st our eares.

This is a song that Ben himself need not be
ashamed to own ; and the last stanza of *To Musick
to becalm his Fever* is also charming in its more
tripping rhythm.

Fall on me like a silent dew
Or like those Maiden showers
Which, by the peepe of day doe strew
A Baptisme o'er the flowers.
Melt, melt my paines
With thy soft straines ;
That having ease me given,
With full delight
I take my flight
For Heaven.

Now for a Bacchanalian ditty, one of many ; for
Herrick easily fell into the Anacreontic mood.

A LYRICK TO MIRTH

While the milder Fates consent,
Let's enjoy our merriment ;
Crowned with clusters of the vine
Let us sit and quaff our wine.
Call on Bacchus : shout his praise ;
Shake the Thyrses, and bite the Bayes ;
Rouse Anacreon from the dead
And return him drunk to bed :
Sing o'er Horace ; for ere long
Death will come to mar the song :
Then shall *Wilson* and *Gotiere*
Never sing or play more here.

There is a fine abandonment in this Lyric which has in it something of the reckless ardour of Titian's Bacchus, as he flings himself from his chariot at the sight of Ariadne. But, like the Egyptians, Herrick brings the Death's head to the feast to give a relish to the wine.

This death-motif is the ground-bass upon which he has embroidered many a lovely piece of musical descant, as in many of his love poems and flower pieces. Change, decay, and death are the heritage of all mortal things. He walks for ever over his own grave, and moralises like Hamlet, while the gravedigger is at work upon Ophelia's. It must have been a little embarrassing to his many "Mistresses" to have been so constantly reminded of the fleeting nature of their charms, and the certainty of their death, as of his own. He is too fond of asking them to assist at his obsequies; but he took so long to die that many of them, tired of waiting, may have left the world before him, as the word "departure" in the poem *Upon the losse of his Mistresses*, suggests.

All are gone ;
Onely Herrick's left alone
For to number sorrow by
Their departure thence, and die.

The ladies immortalised in this poem and others, appear to have taken his love as lightly as he took it himself, with a pleasant temporary affection. Julia, it seems, married someone else. Probably the others did the same; at any rate they did not persecute him with their constancy.

Here is an example of one of his funereal love poems.

HIS CHARGE TO JULIA AT HIS DEATH

Dearest of thousands, now the time draws neere,
That with my Lines, my Life must full-stop here.
Cut off thy haire : and let thy Teares be shed
Over my Turfe, when I am buried.
Then for effusions, let none wanting be,
Or other Rites that doe belong to me ;
As Love shall help thee, when thou do'st goe hence
Unto thy everlasting residence.

He is not however always so lugubrious. Julia might well shed a few tears, and scatter a few locks of her hair over his turf for the sake of this most exquisite song.

TO DAISIES NOT TO SHUT SO SOON

Shut not so soon ; the dull-eyed night
Has not as yet begun
To make a seizure on the light
Or to seale up the Sun.

Dr Grosart says he would fain have removed from his edition of the *Hesperides* the epigrams modelled upon what Byron calls "those nauseous epigrams of Martial" as one removes a snail from the lily's heart ; but the passion of the collector for a complete edition was too strong for him. Herrick had keen senses, and freely uttered his disgust at all sordidness of person as of spirit. He hated painting and

padding, and expressed his hatred in such lines as these :

UPON A PAINTED GENTLEWOMAN

Men say ye're faire, and faire ye are 'tis true
But (Hark) we praise the Painter now, not you.

Let us turn from these satires to some of the most beautiful poems in the book, those on flowers, and the epitaphs on women and children, as delicate in their perfection as the flower poems, and grave with a tenderer pathos. *To Daffodils*, among the loveliest things in the English language, is too well known to need quotation, but *The Primrose*, beginning :

Aske me why I send you here
This sweet Infanta of the yeare ?

and those elegiac lines suggested by the same flower are also among the *Musarum Deliciæ* :

TO PRIMROSES FILLED WITH MORNING DEW

Why do you weep, sweet Babes ? Can teares
Speak grief in you.

With these Epitaphs we must bid farewell to that garden of delights, the *Hesperides* :

UPON A VIRGIN

Here a solemn Fast we keepe ;
While all beauty lies asleep
Husht be all things ; no noyse here
But the toning of a teare ;
Or a sigh of such as bring
Cowslips for her covering.

UPON A CHILD THAT DIED

Here she lies, a pretty bud
 Lately made of flesh and blood
 Who as soon fell fast asleep,
 As her little eyes did peep.
 Give her strewings ; but not stir
 The earth, that lightly covers her.

Herrick's evident love of children, and sympathy with them, gives me a pleasant excuse for straying a moment into the more solemn closes of *Noble Numbers*, in which there are many poems which deserve to be better known. The two *Graces for Children* are charming, especially the second :

Here a little child I stand
 Heaving up my either hand ;
 Cold as Paddocks though they be
 Here I lift them up to Thee.
 For a Benison to fall
 On our meat and on us all. *Amen.*

That touch about the child's hands being cold as frogs, as we should say, is unexpected and delightful. There is humorous tenderness too, not without its pathos, in that poem which has been objected to by some :

TO HIS SAVIOUR, A CHILD ; A PRESENT BY A CHILD

Go, pretty child, and beare this Flower
 Unto thy little Saviour ;
 And tell him by that Bud new-blown
 He is the *Rose of Sharon* known :

When thou hast said so, stick it there
 Upon His Bibb, or Stomacher :
 And tell Him (for good handsell too)
 That thou hast brought a Whistle new,
 Made of a clean straight oaten reed,
 To charm His cries (at time of need).
 Tell Him, for Corall thou hast none :
 But if thou had'st, He should have one.
 But poore thou art, and known to be
 Even as monillesse as He.

This is quite in the spirit of some Holy Families in old Italian pictures, innocent in their homeliness.

There was a child-like element in Herrick's nature which comes out in his religious poems ; for how should a man come before God, save as a child ? To know him thoroughly one must read *Noble Numbers* as well as the *Hesperides*. He seems always to have had a child's faith in God as a Father, turning to him frankly, sin or no sin, to be comforted after whatever scourging he may have deserved. His address *To his angrie God* thus concludes :

Long, long, I'm sure
 This can't endure ;
 But in short time 'twill please thee
 My gentle God
 To burn the rod
 Or strike so as to ease me.

He trusted in the sympathetic intelligence of God. There seems to me to be an undertone of humorous feeling in the prayer for pardon :

Pardon me, God, (once more I Thee intreat)

the "irreverence" of which has also been objected to by some austere people who think it wrong to smile in the presence of their Maker.

I will conclude with the last stanzas of his *Litanie to the Holy Spirit*.

When the Priest his last has praid
And I nod to what is said,
Cause my speech is now decaid ;
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When the Tempter me pursu'th
With the sins of all my youth,
And half damns me with untruth ;
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When the Judgment is revealed,
And that open which was sealed
When to Thee I have appealed ;
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

Herrick was a good Anglican of his time, not a mystic of the visionary sort, not one of those who make spiritual discoveries ; but there is a genuine religious feeling in *Noble Numbers*. He trusted in God's love, made manifest in the coming of Christ, and felt it even behind His anger with that piece of clay He had moulded into a man. He frankly set his secret sins in the light of God's countenance and his worship was not hypocritical. He held by the love that casts out fear, and might almost have said with his last breath, as Heine did : *Dieu me pardonnera—c'est son métier*.

AN UNCONSIDERED TRIFLE

WHEN considering what unconsidered trifle I might pick up for the delectation of the Sette this evening, I filched from my own shelves the First Series of the *Obiter Dicta* of that robust Essayist Augustine Birrell—neither stolen nor bought by me, but presented by the author. In his Essay on “Truth Hunting,” he contrasts the character of Charles Lamb with that of some of his friends—in particular Coleridge, whose nebulous mind affords Mr Birrell no rest for the foot of his soul. “Godwin, Hazlitt and Coleridge!” he cries. “Where are now their novel philosophies and systems? Bottled moonshine which does *not* improve by keeping.” He goes on to contrast the flabbiness of Coleridge’s misty morality with the quiet strength of Lamb’s devotion to the duties that lay nearest to him. “We want Lambs, not Coleridges,” he sums up. “The verdict to be striven for is not ‘well guessed,’ but ‘Well done!’”

Yet Lamb, a more tolerant critic of our frail humanity, gratefully acknowledged the stimulating effect of Coleridge’s friendship, and modestly looked up to him as an inspiring teacher in the early days of their intimacy; and after Coleridge’s three weeks’ visit to him during his brief sojourn in Chapel Street, Pentonville, he writes to his friend Manning: “The more I see of him in the quotidian undress and

relaxation of his mind, the more cause I see to love him, and believe him *a very good man*, and all those foolish impressions to the contrary fly off like morning slumbers." So much for the difference of standpoint; but opium had not then made a slave of Coleridge.

Charles Lamb himself did well in that world of dreams, Literature; and as victoriously in the stern world of fact we have to live in; for his heart and intellect were sound. Though he came of a stock with insane tendencies and was not without his weaknesses, he had what he himself calls "the sanity of true genius" as well as its brooding fantasy, and humorous melancholy. He was a staunch, faithful, and affectionate son, brother and friend. There is a pathetic heroism in that patient cribbage in his precious evenings, with his old father, petulant in his dotage, and irascible without provocation. How changed from that modest hero of the *Essay on the Old Benchers*—that Lovel who "once wrested a sword out of the hand of a man of quality that had drawn upon him, and pummelled him severely with the hilt of it. The swordsman had offered insult to a female—an occasion on which no odds against him could have prevented the interference of Lovel. He could stand next day bareheaded to the same person, modestly to extenuate his interference—for Lovel never forgot rank, where something better was not concerned."

In his everyday life Lamb based his feet firmly on what we call the real world; yet could make for himself wings to explore the world of imagination, no less real for him. Like William Blake, the

mystical dreamer, he was an angler in the mysterious streams of the backwoods of the mind, and loved like him to

Fish for fancies as they pass
Within the watery glass.

Like the sturdy moralist Dr Johnson, he was a true Londoner; but London was for him a City of Romance. He walked about it like the Khalif Haroun-er-Rushid about the Baghdad of the Arabian Nights, in his inconspicuous disguise—the garb of a city clerk; seeking adventures in the delightful dreamland of his own imagination. His outer life was given a cloistral tone by his birth and long residence in the Temple; for though all his adventures were not, like those of Dr Primrose and his wife “by the fireside,” and his migrations extended further than “from the blue bed to the brown,” he was not much of a traveller. Born in Crown Office Row in the Inner Temple in 1775, he was a young contemporary of Johnson, Garrick, Horace Walpole, Burke, and Sheridan; he was a child with Wordsworth, Scott, Coleridge and Southey, and might have been at the christening of Landor and Jane Austen. He passed from his Dame-School at six years old to a day school kept by Dr William Bird “the eminent writer, and teacher of languages and mathematics,” as he was described by his usher, in an advertisement. “Heaven knows what *languages* were taught in it,” says Lamb. “By mathematics, reader, must be understood ciphering.”

Between seven and eight he was sent to Christ’s Hospital, as a small nervous, stammering, and

according to his old schoolfellow Le Grice, "plantigrade boy" with walk slow and peculiar. There the Rev. James Boyer, a great wielder of the rod, was Head Master; for whom at his death, his pupil Coleridge expressed the pious wish: "May all his faults be forgiven; and may he be wafted to bliss by little cherub boys, all head and wings, with no *bottoms* to reproach his sublunary infirmities!" "J. B.," says Lamb, in his Christ's Hospital Essay, "had a heavy hand."

At fifteen Lamb entered the office of Joseph Paice, Merchant and Director of the South Sea Company, "the only pattern of consistent gallantry I have met with," says Lamb. "He was the finest gentleman of his time. He had not one system of attention to females in the drawing-room, and another in the shop, or at the stall. I have seen him stand bare-headed—smile if you please—to a poor servant girl, while she has been inquiring of him the way to some street—in such a posture of unforced civility as neither to embarrass *her* in the acceptance, nor himself in the offer of it."

After six months with Mr Paice he became a clerk in the South Sea House, the outward shell of the collapsed Bubble; where he actually received a share of the soap-suds in the shape of half a guinea a week. At seventeen he was transferred to the East India House, where after three years' service, he received a salary of £40 a year, increased to £70 the next year. There he remained for thirty-three years, quitting it at fifty, with a pension of £450 a year.

Meanwhile Lamb lived for the last quarter of the

eighteenth century in Crown Office Row where he was born ; then for a few months of its last year in Chapel Street, Pentonville, with his sister Mary, the friend and companion of his life. They soon returned to the Temple like doves to the Ark ; this time to Mitre Court Buildings. The Temple, in spite of their various migrations, and final separation from it, was their natural home. They came back to it now rejoicing.

" I have partly fixed upon most delectable rooms," Lamb writes to his friend Manning, " which look out (when you stand a-tiptoe) over the Thames and Surrey Hills, at the upper end of King's Bench Walk. There I shall have all the privacy of a house without the encumbrance and shall be able to lock my friends out as often as I desire to hold free communion with my immortal mind. . . . I shall be as airy up four pair of stairs as in the country ; and in a garden, in the midst of enchanting, more than Mahometan paradise, London, whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley, and her lowest-bowing tradesman I would not exchange for Skiddaw or Helvellyn. . . ." And again in a strain much like a passage from Walt Whitman to whom " these States " were as fine a subject for dithyrambics, he treats Wordsworth to this piece of fervid rhetoric in reply to an invitation to the Lakes. " The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street, the innumerable trades, tradesmen and customers, coaches, waggons, playhouses ; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden ; the very women of the town ; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles—life awake, if *you* awake at all hours of the night, the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street. . . .

The wonder of these sights impels me to night walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fullness of joy at so much life. All these emotions," he goes on, flinging down the gauntlet to Wordsworth, "must be strange to you; . . . but consider what must I have been doing all my life, not to have lent great portions of my heart, with usury, to such scenes. My attachments are all local, purely local. I have no passion (or have had none since I was in love, and then it was the spurious engendering of poetry and books) to groves and valleys. The rooms where I was born, the furniture which has been before my eyes all my life, a bookcase which has followed me about like a faithful dog (only exceeding him in knowledge) wherever I have moved, old chairs, old tables, streets, squares, where I have sunned myself, my old school—these are my mistresses—have I not enough without your mountains?"

But the London Lamb knew was very different from the London of our own day. That old London was still a city conservative of its traditions. The manners and customs of the eighteenth century still lingered in the first quarter of the nineteenth. The city's history was still legible in many an old building now doomed or already swept away—erased forever by the palimpsest of modern improvement, like some of those old Inns of Court that Lamb loved "with their learned air, and halls, and butteries, just like Cambridge Colleges," as he tells Manning.

That old London of his was on better terms with the country around it, wherein it sat like an ancient lady in her garden; not as the modern Metropolis,

like a bloated she-spider in the midst of her web of iron rails, devouring and devastating as its meshes expand year by year. The London he knew enshrined in its green suburbs many a village that retained something of its old rurality. Its slowly advancing outskirts blended more decently with the country beyond ; and in the heart of the city the old arts and crafts still flourished before the age of machinery had strangled them. Barring " Bubbles " and an occasional bank smash, men went about their business quietly and amassed their small fortunes with a grave decorum after the manner of the Industrious Apprentice. Even the Stock Exchange was not always in high fever. The life of the town jogged on at a sober and leisurely pace. Men had time to watch the motley throng as Lamb did. Even the building of houses was still a matter of deliberate care and thought in design and construction. Some sense of proportion still lingered in the builder's mind, and ornament was not usually an eyesore.

Yet underlying the old-fashioned decorum much barbarism still existed. What an old-world romance of the road then is that tale of a highway robbery on the wilds of Hampstead Heath, told by Lamb in a letter to Southey in the year of the Irish rising 98 ! " My tailor has brought me home a new coat lapelled, with a velvet collar. He assures me everybody wears velvet collars now. . . . My meek gentleman was robbed the other day, coming with his wife and family in a one-horse shay from Hampstead ; the villains rifled him of four guineas, some shillings and halfpence, and a bundle of

customers' measures, which they swore were bank-notes. They did not shoot him, and when they rode off he address them with profound gratitude, making a congee. 'Gentlemen, I wish you good-night, and we are very much obliged to you that you have not used us ill.' And this is the cuckoo that has had the audacity to foist upon me ten buttons on a side, and a black velvet collar—a cursed ninth of a scoundrel!"

But why should the gentle Charles—may I omit the epithet *gentle*; for did not Lamb resent it when used by Coleridge in patronising fashion in one of his turgid and lumbering blank-verse effusions—why should our *pungent* Charles apply such opprobrious epithets to the hero of the one-horse shay? He seems to have surrendered his tape measure with something of the dignified courtesy of those Spanish captains whom we see in the well-known engraving surrendering their swords to Nelson, to be tucked under the arm of the barefooted tar who attends him. Lamb can never have seen that picture, but he once saw Nelson in the flesh. "Wasn't you sorry for Lord Nelson?" he wrote to Hazlitt, "I have followed him in fancy since I saw him walking in Pall Mall (I was prejudiced against him before) looking just as a hero should look; and I have been very much cut about it indeed. He was the only pretence of a great man we had. Nobody is left of any name at all."

Pretence in connection with Nelson seems "a vile phrase," but we may hope that Lamb used the word in its heraldic sense of something held out as a challenge to all comers.

This letter is dated November 1805—before the great Admiral had been mastheaded in effigy in Trafalgar Square for frequent disobedience of orders.

Lamb's letters, which are glimpses of his mind in dressing-gown and slippers, are pleasant reading ; and as they and his Poems are less known than his Essays, we may linger over them awhile ; the Letters being the daily bread wherewith he regaled his friends, the Poems the vintage of his rarer moods. He was a good talker too, and listened with interjectory notes, which often seasoned the talk with the pepper and salt of his whimsical wit. One would like to have hovered in spirit in the tobacco-laden air of that "little smoky room" in the *Salutation and Cat*, Newgate Street, where he and Coleridge in their salad days foregathered over a Welsh rarebit and "Egg-hot," discussing poetry and the Coleridgean theory of the Universe. They were both Unitarians then ; but Coleridge's daring speculations as to the "Nature of the Deity," and His relation to the human spirit seem at times to have offended Lamb's sense of reverence, as well as his common sense.

In one of his early letters to Coleridge he complains of "a certain freedom of expression, a certain air of mysticism more consonant to the conceits of Pagan philosophy than is consistent with the humility of genuine piety. . . . Let us attend to the proper business of human life, and talk a little respecting our domestic concerns." Attend to the business of life—that is very characteristic of Lamb.

Here is his slap-dash criticism of Burnet's *History of his own Times*. "Did you ever read that garrulous pleasant history ? He tells his story like an old

man past political service bragging to his sons in winter evenings of the part he took in public transactions, when 'his old cap was new.' Full of scandal which all true history is, no palliatives; but all the stark wickedness that actually gives the momentum to national actors. Quite the prattle of age and outlived importance. Truth and sincerity staring out upon you perpetually in *alto rilievo*. Himself a party man—he makes *you* a party man. None of the cursed philosophical Humeian indifference, so cold, and unnatural and inhuman! None of the cursed Gibbonian fine writing, so fine and composite. None of Mr Roscoe's sage remarks all so apposite and coming in so clever, lest the reader should have the trouble of drawing an inference. Burnet's good old prattle I can bring present to my mind; I can make the revolution present to me."

In 1802 the Lambs paid a surprise visit to Coleridge at Keswick. "We entered Coleridge's study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose that I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, etc. I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night like an intrenchment; gone to bed for the night as it seemed; but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning." A clamber to the top of Skiddaw and a wade in the bed of Lodore helped him to the conviction that the Lakes were *romantic*. "I have satisfied myself that there is such a thing as that which tourists call *romantic* which I very much suspected before; they make such a spluttering about it."

Afterwards he writes to Coleridge of Chapman's *Homer*, which affected him much as it did Keats. "It has the most continuous power of interesting you all along, like a rapid original, of any. Cowper's ponderous blank verse detains you every moment with some heavy Miltonism; Chapman gallops off with you his own fine pace."

When his farce *Mr H.* was damned at its first performance, Lamb sat in the front of the pit, hooting and hissing with the rest, and he writes to Manning: "Hang 'em how they hissed! . . . Mercy on us that God should give his favourite children, men, mouths to speak with, to discourse rationally, to promise smoothly, to flatter agreeably, to encourage warmly, to counsel wisely, to sing with, to drink with, to kiss with, and that they should turn them into mouths of adders, bears, wolves, hyenas, and whistle like tempests, and emit breath through them like distillations of aspic poison, to asperse and villify the innocent labours of their fellowcreatures who are desirous to please them!"

In 1809 Lamb and his sister Mary moved from Mitre Court to Southampton Buildings, and thence to 4 Inner Temple Lane. Here he first entertained his friends at those Wednesday suppers which Talfourd compares with the dinners at Holland House, for the instinctive tact with which the host and hostess harmonised clashing personalities and set every guest at ease. Lamb was then known to the elect as a writer of rare gifts and humour. At ten o'clock his little coterie began to assemble, the first arrivals usually taking a hand at whist, "the rigour of the game" being no doubt maintained.

This however did not prevent the non-playing guests from exercising their tongues in a preliminary chat, which sometimes swept even the players themselves into the vortex of conversation.

Talfourd pleasantly sketches these Inner Temple chambers: the reception-room with low ceiling, old furniture and walls decorated with Hogarth prints in black frames. Later on when guests began to drop in from the theatres, the supper was brought in by Becky, their faithful, nagging, long-endured servant. It was plain but substantial. "Cold roast lamb or boiled beef, heaps of smoking, roasted potatoes, jugs of porter from an excellent tap in Fleet Street, followed by tumblers of hot brandy and water; and over all Mary Lamb presided "pressing the bashful stranger to his food," and seeing Charles mix his second tumbler with a half-humorous expression of resignation to inevitable fate," as Talfourd tells us. This was the ordinary routine; but on great nights when Wordsworth or Coleridge came, whist was suspended.

There came many men of note in their day—Godwin, the author of *Political Justice*, which may be epigrammatically epitomised as a social philosophy framed for men without passions, by a man of logical intellect without humour; but which influenced Shelley in his earlier works. There came Crabb Robinson, who mentions William Blake in his Diary much as if he were a human *curio* he had picked up. There came also George Dyer, the recluse lover of books and old documents, whose den was Clifford's Inn, and whom Lamb has immortalised in his Essay on *Oxford in the Vacation*; there came Thelwall,

democrat, platform orator and lover of the drama ; Hazlitt, critic, essayist, and worshipper of Napoleon, whose fall at Waterloo he mourned ; Haydon, the painter of pictures in " the grand style," Leigh Hunt and many others. There came also occasionally Lamb's old schoolfellow, Le Grice, who first described him as " plantigrade " and who invented a new method of saying grace. When asked to do so, he would look all round the table : " Is there any clergyman here ? " Then rising solemnly, he would murmur " Thank God ! "

And now to turn from Lamb's letters to his poems, sometimes quaintly humorous—as in the *Farewell to Tobacco*, sometimes tenderly lyrical, sometimes pungently satirical, as in the lines on the Prince Regent which helped to imprison Leigh Hunt—always with a certain daintiness of expression.

Take as a specimen of his serious lyrics the lines on the *Death of a Young Quakeress* entitled *Hester*. Here are the last two stanzas :

My sprightly neighbour ! gone before
To that unknown and silent shore,
Shall we not meet as heretofore
Some summer morning,

When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
A bliss that would not go away,
A sweet forewarning.

They make a charming cadence to the poem. It lingers on the ear as good and simple verses should do. It is not pathos, but beauty suggesting pathos.

The *Old Familiar Faces* is well known. It is a blank verse lyric, the metre being a successful adaptation of a classic form.

Lamb's Sonnets are not equal to his more distinctly lyrical verse ; but the sonnet "Written at Cambridge," "I was not trained in academic bowers," has a biographical interest ; for it embodies his youthful dream of a University education.

The Gipsy's Malison is a poem of a graver and more tragic kind, and Lamb has handled his subject with great originality, power, and tenderness.

But Lamb lives in his Essays more intimately than in his poems. His Essays are the delightful outpouring of his love of men and books, and the life of men as he knew or imagined it. His prose with its racy turns of expression while recalling his favourite old authors is his own. In the *Elia* of the Essays we have the Charles Lamb of the Letters in his most genial moments, when he is talking to himself about the things he most delights in, or gossiping with a sympathetic reader in a strain of fraternal confidence.

Now it is easy enough, in one sense, to make quotations from Lamb. He is full of wise and kindly thoughts quaintly and daintily expressed ; but in spite of his whimsical way of bringing together in one passage treasure trove of all kinds from near or distant regions of thought or fantasy : from London streets, from Classic or English literature, from everyday life or from books, he manages to bring them all into friendly relations with each other ; with his own benign spirit, and through that with the reader's mind. He is never commonplace—never

tedious. He leads you on like a shepherd through green pastures and beside still waters. The difficulty comes when you try to isolate and carry off your quotation. Then you feel like the pilferer of flowers from some perfectly arranged garden, the stealer of a jewel from its appropriate setting. You feel inclined to ravish with you the whole essay; for, once you begin to pillage, you find it hard to leave off.

Let us begin with his *Sanity of True Genius*, not among his best-known Essays. He is attacking Dryden's *dictum*, "Great wits are sure to madness near allied," though he does not mention Dryden.

"So far from the position holding true," he begins, "that great wit, or genius, in our modern way of speaking, has a necessary alliance with insanity, the greatest wits, on the contrary, will ever be found to be the sanest writers. It is impossible for the mind to conceive of a mad Shakespeare." Yet we may reply, Shakespeare in some of his moods may have been conscious of a Hamlet within him, and even looked into the abyss of Lear's madness. In his vast creation of characters he may have instinctively sought to "cleanse his stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart." Hypnotise him and one might have found many strata of personalities in him, below the one wherein he faced the world.

Lamb proceeds "The greatness of wit by which the poetic talent is here chiefly to be understood, manifests itself in the admirable balance of the faculties. . . . The true poet dreams, being awake. He is not possessed by his subject but has dominion over it. . . . Caliban, the Witches are as true to the

laws of their nature (ours with a difference) as Othello, Hamlet, and Macbeth. Herein the great and little wits are differenced; that if the latter wander ever so little from nature or actual existence, they lose themselves and their readers. Their phantoms are lawless, their visions nightmares. They do not create, which implies shaping and considering. Their imaginations are not active . . . but passive, as men in sick dreams." That is a good specimen of Elia's philosophic criticism. In contrast, take him in a more playful humour in his *Complaint of the Decay of Beggars*.

" . . . No rascally comparative insults a Beggar, or thinks of weighing purses with him. He is not in the scale of comparison. . . . No one twitteth him with ostentation above his means. No one accuseth him of pride, or upbraideth him with mock humility. None jostle with him for the wall, or pick quarrels for precedency. No wealthy neighbour seeketh to eject him from his tenement. No man sues him. No man goes to law with him. If I were not the independent gentleman that I am, rather than I would be a retainer of the great, a led captain or a poor relation, I would choose out of the delicacy and true greatness of my mind, to be a Beggar."

Here is a pretty piece of fantasy. Elia comes by with his weighing-machine, puts the man of the purse into one scale and the Beggar into the other, drops his short sentences like silver weights, into the scale of the man of slender means, the man of appearances, and lo! the Jolly Beggar of his very lightness rises to felicity in kicking the beam. Your Beggar ranks next to your Pensioner as a man free from care.

Later in the same Essay Lamb thus describes a stalwart Beggar who had had his legs amputated at the hip-joint and wheeled himself about in a go-cart : " He was a grand fragment, as good as an Elgin marble. The nature which should have recruited his reft legs and thighs was not lost, but only retired to his upper parts, and he was half a Hercules." Thus Lamb's imagination plays about this marred and maimed piece of humanity—pathetic to one commonplace mind, repulsive to another, ridiculous perhaps to a third ; and finds in him something of the sublimity of Greek art, and of the heroism of a demigod. He becomes the *torso* of a masterpiece of Nature's moulding.

In *Witches and other Night Fears*, we find Elia in another mood, in which his imagination shudders over the night fears of his childhood ; and here he lays aside now and then his crisp short sentences for a more solemn rhythm of interwoven clauses. After describing the effect on his mind of the curious pictures in Stackhouse's illustrated *History of the Bible* in which the author's pious refutation of " objections " to the sacred narrative made Lamb, as he tells us " a sceptic in long-coats," he goes on : " I was dreadfully alive to nervous terrors. The night-time, solitude, and the dark, were my hell. The sufferings I endured in this nature would justify the expression. I never laid my head on my pillow, I suppose from the fourth to the eighth year of my life—so far as memory serves in things so long ago—without an assurance, which realised its own prophecy, of seeing some frightful spectre. Be old Stackhouse then acquitted in part, if I say, that to

his picture of the witch raising up Samuel (O that old man covered with a mantle!)—I owe—not my midnight terrors, the hell of my infancy, but the shape and manner of their visitation. It was he who dressed up for me a hag that nightly sate upon my pillow—a sure bedfellow.”

Now turn to the Essay on *Imperfect Sympathies* in which he analyses “the brain of your true Caledonian” again in sentences short and pithy. “His Minerva is born in panoply. You are never admitted to his ideas in their growth—if indeed, they do grow, and are not rather put together upon principles of clock-work. You never catch his mind in undress. . . . He has no falterings of self-suspicion, surmises, guesses, misgivings, half intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions have no place in his brain or vocabulary. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him. Is he orthodox—he has no doubts. Is he an infidel—he has none either.”

Now hear Carlyle on Lamb, with whom his sympathies were singularly “imperfect.” “Charles Lamb I sincerely believe to be in some considerable degree insane. A more pitiful, ricketty, gasping, staggering, stammering tomfool I do not know. . . . His talk contemptibly small, indicating wondrous ignorance and shallowness, even when it was good-mannered, which it seldom was ; usually ill-mannered (to a degree) screwed into frosty artificialities, ghastly make-believe of wit—in fact more like diluted insanity (as I defined it) than anything of real jocosity, humour, or geniality. A most slender fibre of worth in this poor Charles, abundantly

recognisable to me as to others in his better times and moods," etc. etc.

So the Prophet of "Veracity" raves in his youthful heat and spleenful vaticination. Anyone who did not "unpack his heart with words" at a first interview; or better still, remain a great *silent man* with ears open to his eloquence, was for him *anathema maranatha*; and Lamb, imperfectly sympathetic with the fulminating Scot, was, I fear, in our modern slang, pulling Carlyle's leg.

There is, however, a grain of truth in Carlyle's criticism of Lamb's manners. In the presence of a bore, or when tempted to some eccentricity of behaviour he played tricks like a naughty schoolboy—singing "Diddle diddle dumkin"—his comment upon the commonplace or priggish in conversation; taking a candle to examine the bumps of the unfortunate Controller of Stamps, who asked Wordsworth whether he considered Milton a great genius; and playing leap-frog over the stooping shoulders of a man who "gave him a back" as he entered the drawing-room after dinner. In things like these he did what he "ought not to have done." Ne'ertheless (rest his soul) he has left behind him a memory of pleasant savour "for a' that and a' that."

But we must not leave Lamb singing "Diddle diddle dumkin!" We should part from him in a more sympathetic mood. There is an Essay of his for which I have a particular affection, as one of his most finely touched pieces of character study. In this he draws the spiritual portrait of one Captain Jackson as Ruskin draws wayside flowers, with a dexterous precision, the outcome of loving reverence

for a homely bit of God's handiwork. Perhaps I like it all the better, because I once knew a Captain Jackson who managed to preserve a trace of gentility in even more adverse circumstances. He was, when I made his acquaintance, a Landing Waiter at the Custom House in Dublin, evidently the scapegrace of his family, but without the devil-may-carish humour which one expects in an Irish scapegrace; yet he wore his shabby suit of black with the air of an officer and a gentleman who had come down in the world. His business was to superintend the weighing of casks of raw sugar when taken out of bond for duty, to tot up the weights of each lot, and subtract the *tare*. He sat at a desk in the bonded warehouse, the floor of which was clammy with treacle—the *tare* which had run out of the casks—and crawling with huge brown West Indian cockroaches. The whole place was sickly with the smell of treacle. He had little talent, natural or acquired, for arithmetic, and his tots seldom came right: one might therefore have regarded him, on the evidence, as being *beneath* his business; but his air was more convincing; look at him, and you felt he was *above* it. His underlings called him Captain, and helped him out of his difficulties when, in his gentlemanly way, he swore at his figures. I myself, whose duty then it was to pay the duty, often corrected his tots, or did them myself; for though not, like Cassio, "a great arithmetician," I could add and subtract better than he. He must have obtained his place by interest, rather than by tare and tret.

Lamb's Captain Jackson was a man of more genial

and expansive nature. Judging by the robust power of his imagination to evade the sordid imprisonment of fact, and soar to the empyrean of the ideal, he must I think have had Irish blood in him.

"He whom I mean," says Lamb, who had just seen an announcement of his death, "At his cottage on the Bath Road, Captain Jackson"—"was a retired half-pay officer with a wife and two grown-up daughters. Comely girls they were too. And I was in danger of forgetting this man—his cheerful suppers—the noble tone of his hospitality when first you set foot in *the cottage*—the anxious ministering about you, where little or nothing (God knows) was to be ministered. Althea's horn in a poor platter—the power of self-enchantment, by which in his magnificent wishes to entertain you, he multiplied his means and bounties. . . .

"With nothing to live on he seemed to live on everything. He had a stock of wealth in his mind; not that which is properly termed *Content*; for in truth he was not to be contained at all, but overflowed all bounds by the force of a magnificent self-delusion."

Here we may take leave of Lamb, in the playful exercise of his kindly humour; pouring forth from his own Amalthea's Horn the most happily marshalled words and phrases, every one adding a firm yet delicate touch to the imaginative picture seen in his mind's eye. It is in the dainty combination of fine observation of persons and things, with the fanciful suggestion of some rarer atmosphere than that we breathe in everyday life, that the charm of his work resides.

SOME OLD SINGERS

FASHIONS have notably changed in that fantastic palace of the imagination we call Art, as in other places, since I was a boy—in music as well as in morals. Italian opera has lain for dead like Juliet in the tomb of the Capulets, and come, at least partially, to life again. What will be her fate in the future?

But I am not now donning the robes of a prophet, but those of a simple ghost-raiser: my theme is the past. In those old days I was a dweller in that beautiful city of Dublin, which sits upon the odorous Liffey, looked upon by the purple hills, and canopied by a comparatively undiluted sky. I knew not London—the London of that barbarous period, ere the deluge of æsthetic culture had swept the tiger from the hearthrug and the landscape from the coal-scuttle; when as yet “art fabrics” and “art colours” were not, and the fat furniture and chaste upholstery of the virtuous homestead were appalling in their assertion of pompous respectability.

We, the mere Irish, in those old days, solaced our vague artistic aspirations with the belief that we were a musical nation. Had we not our Balfe and Wallace, whose tuneful strains had crossed seas and mountains, and flown from nation to nation, even to the ends of the earth? Had not our “poet of all circles,” Tommy Moore, popularised the “Melodies”

(in sadly garbled versions), wedding them to his own melodious verse? Had not the *Messiah* been first performed in Dublin? Almost we persuaded ourselves that Handel himself was an Irishman, though born, by some strange freak of fortune, among the Saxons in Germany. It was said indeed that he prodigiously admired our "Melodies," though the great musical Autolycus had not, after his usual fashion of showing admiration, conveyed them to his own scores. Yes, certainly we were a musical people, though the Irish harp was as extinct as the Dodo.

The first great music I ever heard was a festival performance of the *Messiah* in Christ Church Cathedral. The two Robinsons, "Joe" and "Frank," as they were affectionately called, and "Dick" Smith, were the principal singers; and Dr (afterwards Sir Robert) Stewart, one of the best organists of his day, was at the organ. Their names are still household words in Dublin.

To a boy with an instinctive love of music, who had never before had an opportunity of hearing anything worthy the name, this performance was ecstasy—revelation of the existence of an absolutely unknown world. When the opening symphony began, and that great organ-music rolled through the dim cathedral, it was not merely as if a door were opened in heaven, and a voice as of a trumpet talking with me and saying: "Come up hither"; it was rather as if heaven itself had opened in one illimitable dawn and quietly absorbed me into itself. I was at once in friendly communion with those "solemn troops and sweet societies that sing, and singing in

their glory move"; for was not I too, uncultured cub as I was, "in the spirit on the Lord's day"?

Then came that loveliest of recitatives, "Comfort ye, my people," sung, I suppose, by Frank Robinson, the most exquisite of cathedral tenors, and a master of expressive phrasing. But I knew nothing then of the singers as human beings, nothing of the vocalist's consummate art; to me they were all unbodied voices—angels singing out of the air. Oh that "Comfort ye," which falls upon the heart like a sacred dew of consolation! Oh that "Every valley," with its ascending passages of bright and solemn exultation, leading to the first great chorus, "And the glory, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed!" Merely to mention the numbers is to recall the familiar music.

But why dwell on particular sections, where all was like the gradual unfolding of one divine flower, beyond anything I had ever imagined? Who was ever so great as this Handel of ours in giving absolute musical expression to the words, when he had the English Bible for his text?

Before the conclusion of the oratorio I was obliged to go back to the work-a-day world; and perhaps this was not so bad a misfortune as it then seemed. It is not wholesome for mortals to spend too much time with people like the angels—so far above them in social station.

To the advanced modern youth, who is nothing if not critical, Handel is rococo—a writer of old-fashioned exercises for that vulgar instrument the human voice, which we now employ so much more artistically in shrieking explanatory comments

through the madhouse of sounds let loose when the blatant orchestra struggles to express the frenzied passion of the composer's soul. To me the majestic innocence of his music is still as fresh and miraculous as the leaves and flowers of spring. It never grows old. He still leads me through green pastures and beside still waters ; he still makes me hear deep calling unto deep at the voice of the waterspouts of God. And he does his spiriting gently, producing great effects by simple means, without the everlasting storm and stress of the modern men, who seem to be always lashing themselves into furious efforts, which accomplish little as compared with the force expended.

Not long after this I went for the first time to hear an Italian opera. The old Theatre Royal, burnt to the ground years ago, then stood in all its glory amid rather shabby surroundings, the home of the legitimate drama in Dublin. Thither came in their season those migratory song-birds, the great Italians, with the scores of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and the younger Verdi, with Mozart, Weber, Meyerbeer to vary the programme, and, once within the memory of man, Glück's *Orfeo*.

My first opera was *Lucia*, with Piccolomini in the title-rôle, and, I think, the accomplished French tenor, Belart, as Edgardo, and the tall and handsome baritone, Aldighieri, as the tyrannic brother. It was the first time, so far as I remember, I had ever entered the wicked walls of a playhouse ; and, though an exciting event, was not so unmixed a bliss as the *Messiah* performance. The Theatre Royal was well-proportioned and quietly decorated—in

fact a smaller Drury Lane in style ; but the state of my finances only permitted me to frequent the upper gallery, where, for the sum of one shilling, you might scramble for a seat, or stand closely packed in an atmosphere composed of carbonic acid and carburetted hydrogen, diluted with a small quantity of ordinary air, and seasoned with many of those indescribable odours which have romantic associations for the veteran playgoer, whereof the smell of orange-peel was by far the most pleasant and salubrious. The dust of ages, which hung in a visible cloud of whirling motes around the grand chandelier, with its myriad lustres of cut glass, made the mixture thick and slab ; and the whole was heated to the temperature of an oven. Far below you might see the stage, like the Tennysonian landscape " winking through the heat." Here, indeed, might the melancholy Hamlet, though he had foregone all custom of exercise, have indulged his passion for feeling his too solid flesh " thaw and resolve itself into a dew." The heat was so pungent and suffocating that many a time, between the acts, I have asked myself the question : " Can I stand this much longer without giving up the ghost ? " But the rising of the curtain banished all such squeamish personal considerations as irrelevant to the matter in hand ; and so I stood or sat in the Olympus of the top gallery, a god among the gods.

The aristocracy of this upper circle in Elysium were the undergraduates from the university, " the Collegians," as they were called, who came in ordered squadrons and fought their way to the front rows. The full dress of the place was a shirt and trousers ;

and a drapery of discarded coats and waistcoats hung gracefully over the parapet, upon which the young Olympians leaned, with arms bared to the shoulders. The gallery was not silent between the acts. In fact it was a place of noisy but tolerated buffoonery. Frequently, however, the time-honoured jokes were interrupted by the voices of amateur singers, sometimes heard in a Christy Minstrel solo and chorus, sometimes more daringly in airs from English or Italian opera. The tenors were often a little uncertain in their high notes, and sometimes collapsed altogether ; but there were two well-known vocalists, one a book-keeper in a "monster shop," the other a solicitor. Both had good baritone voices and sang remarkably well. They were always listened to with rapt attention, and loudly applauded, sometimes even encored. Arditi, who knew the humours of the place, and was a most popular conductor, used to wait quietly at his desk until the soloist in the gallery had finished his "Il Balen'," or other popular air, before starting his orchestra, and was always greeted with a hearty "Bravo, Arditi !"

Piccolomini was a prodigious favourite in Dublin. She was not a great singer, but she had a bright and *piquante* personality, a roguish smile of infinite good-humour, and a pleasant talent for light comedy. The gods adored her, wrote and sang odes in her honour, and on farewell or benefit nights would let down huge bouquets by prearranged baskets and cords, and after the performance, taking the horses from her carriage, would draw her home to her hotel, from the balcony of which she would sometimes regale

them with *Home, Sweet Home*, or *The Last Rose of Summer*. The classic Piccolomini hymn was written to the tune of *Britannia, the Pride of the Ocean*, and I happen to remember a few lines, which ran as follows :—

The bright sunny smile, and the pleasure
Which beams from thine eye while you sing,
Have brought us a joy beyond measure,
For which we thy praises now ring !

Piccolomini, on her part, liked her audiences in the musical city. "It does not matter how many false notes I sing," she said, "they applaud me all the same." She was not at her best in tragic parts, though she could pass easily from gaiety to swift and subtle touches of pathos which surprised laughter into a sudden dimness of the eyes. She made a respectable Violetta in *La Traviata* ; but her *Lucia* was not a great performance. In fact the rôle of a tragic heroine was a strain upon her bright and genial nature. I, however, was no critic on that first night, but was content to use what wits I had in trying to follow the story through the devious mazes of opera, with the aid of the libretto. I confess that at first I was rather dazed, and even offended by the stage conventions. We all begin, I suppose, by fancying ourselves stern realists, and think what should interest us is the crude representation of nature, and not that imaginative suggestion which interprets nature. But I came away in love with Italian music and the musical Italian language, in love with Piccolomini, distinctly opera-bitten, and determined to go again.

The next time I heard *La Figlia del Reggimento*, with the same company, and it gave me genuine delight. Piccolomini was here in her element. She had great personal charm—the charm of kindly and sympathetic womanhood—a spice of humour which gave life to her acting in comedy, and her voice was pleasant and sympathetic when not overtaxed. Even her technical shortcomings seemed to save her from the coldness of a stereotyped perfection. All was spontaneous and impulsive, and she had art enough to make her conceptions clear. The part of Maria suited her perfectly. Her heart was in it, and she played and sang it *con amore*. Her “Ciascun lo dice” was full of innocent yet saucy brightness. In her “Convien partir,” when forced to take leave of the regiment, whose daughter she was to be no more, she gave the words and music with a true pathetic expression which touched the hearts of her audience. Her scene when, in her unfamiliar long petticoats, the poor little *vivandière* is being taught deportment by her newly found aunt, the Marchesa, while her dear old Sergeant Sulpizio hovers in the background, ready to sympathise with her madcap impulses of revolt, was delightful. Belart was a sympathetic Tonio, tender, chivalrous, and graceful, and the love scenes went admirably.

I was now somewhat acclimatised in stageland, and the absurdities of the libretto—a good one, as libretti go—and the stage improbabilities, no longer vexed my soul. This charming little musical idyll of innocent love opened for me a new world of romance and beauty, and I followed the simple agonies and

transports of the not too star-crossed lovers with interest and fellow-feeling.

But I must not linger over the details of my haphazard musical education, in which I began the serious study of opera, with one finger, in Davidson's libretti, and learnt to sing "the music of the principal airs," as therein given (in strict seclusion, let me say), with as near an approach to a finished Italian style as I could attain. The soprano airs I was compelled to reproduce by whistling. At first, unlike Shakespeare, it was I who toiled in vain after panting Time; but a musical friend, more fortunate than myself in having had some lessons on the piano, suggested the vulgar method of counting 1, 2, 3, and 1, 2, 3, 4, and showed me how more satisfactory effects could be obtained with five and even ten fingers. So gradually did I advance to the greater glory of those charming vocal scores of the blessed Boosey, and the arrangements of Rimbault; and felt like Keats over Chapman's *Homer*, only that a whole galaxy of new planets began to swim into my ken.

I last heard Piccolomini in *Don Giovanni* and *Le Nozze*. She was a most fascinating and coquettish Zerlina, and an excellent Susanna—bright, astute, and yet loyal. The parts called out all her powers of dramatic expression. Her "Vedrai Carino" and "Batti, batti" were given with the humorous tenderness in which she excelled. Her by-play was always admirable. In the scene, for instance, in which Don Giovanni invites the peasants to the ball, as Badiali, who played the Don with all the dignity of a grand seigneur, was giving his directions to Leporello, she stole up behind him and, attracted by the gold

lace on his cloak, lifted the corner to examine it more closely with eye and finger ; then, as he turned, stepped back and stood quietly beside Masetto, looking as demure and *insouciant* as a kitten caught in the act of playing with its mother's tail. Her voice was not rich and deep enough for "Deh vieni, non tardar," in *Le Nozze*, but in the lighter passages, the opening duet with Figaro, vivaciously played by Cotogni, "Crudel, perchè finora," with Aldighieri, and the scenes with Cherubino and the Countess, she was charming. She never lost her grip of a comedy part.

But now memories of the great singers of a bygone time, most of them long dead, come crowding round me ; how am I to raise these silent ghosts ?

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory.

But each man's memory is a more or less imperfect phonograph for himself alone.

I first heard *Don Giovanni* with Tietjens as Donna Anna, Badiali as the Don, Giuglini as Ottavio, Bossi as Leporello, Aldighieri as Masetto, Ciampi as the Commendatore, and Piccolomini, as I have said, as Zerlina. The name of the lady who took the part of Elvira, a tall, handsome woman, who sang and acted admirably, escapes me. It was an exceptionally fine cast, and I shall never forget the impression the great opera made upon me, with its absolutely clear construction, its beautiful melodies, so perfectly vocal, so characteristic of each of the *dramatis personæ*, so perfectly expressive of the dramatic emotion.

Mozart seemed to me then, as he does still, the most Shakespearean of composers in his power of recreating the characters of his libretti and making them vividly alive in the higher atmosphere of ideal poetic beauty. It is nature still, but nature purified of all the sordid dross that hinders the complete expression of life. His personages live in his scores—live with a gracious musical individuality. Each has an appropriate strain, and needs no *Leitmotif* to label him ; and as the drama goes forward on the stage the different strains blend easily in a counterpoint of character as well as of melody.

The Donna Anna of Tietjens was always fine as a piece of vocalisation ; but she had not much instinct for character. She was rather a great singer on the stage than a great dramatic singer. She lacked spontaneous warmth of expression, and her movements and gestures were academic. Her great triumph in this opera was her splendid declamation of the aria “ Or sai che l’ onore,” in which Donna Anna denounces Don Juan as the murderer of her father. In the lovely masked trio, and the “ Trema, trema,” also, her magnificent voice and style gave full effect to the music.

She was better in the elaborate and grandiose rôle of Semiramide, in which, with Trebelli as Arsace, Agnesi, the prince of Rossinian baritones, whose fine and marvellously flexible voice revelled in all the florid passages, as Assur, and Foli as Oroë, her performance was a thing to remember. Trebelli was superb in “ D’ un tenero amore,” and, indeed, all through. In the concerted passages her rich voice gave warmth and colour to the crystalline

purity of that of Tietjens. In the hands of such artists as these Rossini's florid Assyrians became imposing musical personalities.

But it was only in *Fidelio*, the exacting music of which she sang magnificently, that Tietjens rose to her full height as an operatic singer. In this part she seemed to be carried out of herself, and sang and acted with a fervour and intensity that gave full effect to the tender heroism of Leonora. You forgot the absurdity of her appearance in the ugly costume which was supposed to transform the big woman into a boy.

Gardoni was the Florestan, Bossi the Rocco, Santley the Pizarro, Sinico the Marcellina, and Rinaldini the Jaquino in the Dublin production. I had waited with impatience for an opportunity of hearing the great symphonic opera, the vocal music of which I knew tolerably well from Boosey's score; and I was fortunate enough, on this grand occasion, to secure a good seat in the pit, by the expenditure of a whole half-crown. The prison scene was from beginning to end one of the most thrilling things I ever saw or heard on the stage, for pathos, for breathless suspense, for noble passion, for high spiritual beauty and intensity. Here was music that was like a refiner's fire, a lightning-storm of wholesome, sane, purifying emotion. Gardoni was one of the most perfectly trained tenors I have ever heard—trained in the good old Italian school to express every *nuance* of feeling without melodramatic exaggeration, by means of perfect musical phrasing. His voice was a small one, and he used the falsetto freely in the upper register, but he used it exquisitely.

His reading of the part of Florestan, the imprisoned patriot, whose *Leitmotif* is the one word *duty*, was really admirable, for he gave dramatic expression to the varying moods of emotion Beethoven has so delicately caught in his music: the weary resignation of the first *adagio*; the half-delirious excitement of the ensuing *allegro*, when the vision of his wife, coming like an angel to set him free, hovers before the eyes of the man exhausted by solitude and starvation; the pathos of the brief snatches of talk when Leonora, disguised as Fidelio, gives him food and wine, which he takes without fear of poison; the hysterical ecstasy of the great duet between husband and wife, after Pizarro has left the dungeon defeated, in which the vocal passages have something of the poignant intensity of violin music.

If poor Giuglini had had the dramatic feeling and the consummate art of Gardoni, what a singer he would have been! What a voice the man had! Never was there such a tenor voice, with the luscious richness of a fine contralto, yet full of sunshine, and with a voluble ease in its delivery which must have resembled that of Lablache, whose great bass I have heard compared to "oil rolling out of a cask." And this golden voice, so full, so round, so flute-like, so voluptuous in its quality—a voice that Titian might have painted his Venetian beauties with—was thrown away upon a faun-like undeveloped creature, who stood or sauntered about the stage like a child in a dream, or Coleridge in Cheapside. The part of Don Ottavio suited Giuglini well enough, for Ottavio is a John-a-Dreams, a *fainéant*; and his "Il mio tesoro" and "Dalla sua pace" were simply delicious.

The one part, however, in which he displayed something like passion was that of Lionello, in *Marta*. His "M' appari" was his masterpiece of expression. His favourite amusement in those days, besides letting off fireworks, was flying kites—not on the Stock Exchange, but in the Phoenix Park.

Later on Weber's *Der Freyschütz* and *Oberon* were given in Dublin. In *Der Freyschütz* Tietjens was the Agatha, and gave an artistic reading of the music of her part; but Santley's Caspar was what impressed me most. It was a splendid performance; and his dramatic rendering of his two solos, the drinking song and the following song of scornful triumph, when he has got Max into his power, gave full expression to the cynical and sinister character of the black magician of the piece.

As Rezia, in *Oberon*, Tietjens was more in her element than as the simple peasant girl. Her address to the ocean was a superb piece of vocalisation. Campanini was Sir Huon, and his robust voice gave full effect to the great war song. Santley was his faithful squire, Scherasmin, and Trebelli, Fatima—and what a Fatima she was! All the rich and mysterious melancholy of the East seemed to be exhaled from her as she sang that lovely air, with its fascinating refrain of "Al, al, al," in which Fatima mourns for her native Arabia; and in the ensuing duet both she and Santley sang divinely. I still hear the strange half-coquettish pathos of her voice on the words "Schiavi siamo, schiavi!" Trebelli, who succeeded Alboni, whom I never heard, was in the very first rank of the singers of her day, with her perfectly trained, rich, velvety contralto,

which seemed only to gain in fulness and depth, and even in a sort of plum-like bloom, as the years went on. It had exquisite *nuances* of tone, and something of the vibrant reedy quality of a hautbois, as well as the thrush-like sadness of the low notes of a flute. It lent itself to all forms of dramatic expression, coquetry, tenderness, passion, pathos, humour, indignation, scorn. And she was one of the most versatile actresses of the day, getting to the heart of every character she assumed: Arsace, Azucena, Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, Maffio Orsini in *Lucrezia*, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, Cherubino in *Le Nozze*, the Page in the *Huguenots*, Siebel in *Faust*. She was one of the very few women I have ever seen who looked or acted well in male parts. Her Cherubino was Mozart's amorous young page alive upon the stage, and the subtlety of her play when he is dressed up as a girl was wonderful. She was a veritable boy in girl's clothes. Her dramatic instinct was fine and exquisitely trained; and in fact, all things considered, she was the most perfect artist then on the operatic stage.

In the train of Tietjens came many other notable singers, among whom were Sinico, charming as Zerlina, Susanna, Marcellina, Rosina, and Papagena; and the great bass, Foli of the mellow voice, that gave mysterious majesty to the Priest of Isis in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Oroë in *Semiramide*, and humorous dignity to Basilio in the *Barbiere*; and Bossi, who never obtained the meed of fame which was his due. He was an admirable singer, though his voice had not the fine quality of Foli's; and like most of the Italians of his day, he was an excellent actor. He was a

delightful Leporello, giving him something of that mixture of childish simplicity and humorous common-sense with which Cervantes has so richly endowed Sancho Panza. His catalogue scene with Donna Elvira was full of *naïve* good-natured brutality. The simple exuberance of his knavish delight, as he overwhelmed yet fascinated the poor woman with the tale of her husband's infidelities, expecting her to enjoy it as much as he did himself, was infectious.

He was a capital Rocco, kind-hearted and considerate as a man, but inflexible as a gaoler ; indulgent to the poor devils in his custody, so far as prison discipline admitted, but ready to carry out the orders of his superior officer, when he had the king's warrant for what he did, with the unquestioning obedience of a soldier. These two sides of Rocco's character Bossi gave admirably.

From Rocco to Mephistopheles is a long step ; but the seven-league boots of Bossi's imagination carried him easily over the distance. He was the first, and on the whole the best, Mephistopheles I ever saw ; not a heavy German devil, but with a racy Italian quality of cynical *bonhomie*. His "Dio del or'" and the mock serenade were full of pungent diabolic humour. He played with his victims "as a cat with the mouse," to quote Goethe himself. His fooling with Martha was an exquisite piece of comedy, and his by-play all through the garden scene was masterly. He was like the snake lurking in Eden, always keeping himself in the background, but always making his presence felt. His weak point was the scene in the church. On one occasion, when Bossi suffered from temporary

hoarseness, I heard Santley give the accusing spirit's denunciation of Margherita with better effect than he.

The first time *Faust* was given in Dublin, Sims Reeves was the Faust, Tietjens the Margherita, Bossi the Mephistopheles, Santley the Valentine, Trebelli the Siebel, and Bauermeister the Martha. The opera was then new to Irish audiences, and I was immensely impressed by it. The first act especially, and the garden and church scenes, seemed to me something new, beautiful, and thoroughly dramatic. Gounod's skilful use of modern harmonies, and the exquisite delicacy of his orchestration, with its fine handling of the instruments of the band, was a revelation after the crude work of the great *improvisatori*, Bellini, Donizetti, and the Verdi of those old days. Sims Reeves's Faust was a dainty and artistic piece of work, and the first act, between him and Bossi, went splendidly. I never heard the weariness, the disgust of life, the smouldering desire for the inexperienced happiness it yet might give, culminating in the feeble fury of the curse upon all human aspirations, and the despairing appeal to the devil, better interpreted; and after the entry of Mephistopheles the scene ran its course of feverish excitement with irresistible *élan*. In the garden scene also the great English tenor sang admirably, and his "Salve dimora" was exquisite.

Santley's Valentine was his greatest operatic performance. His vibrating baritone, and manly style of using it, were always welcome; for every part he undertook was studied with most conscientious care, and performed with the satisfactory thoroughness of a good workman who loved his work

and scamped nothing ; but the tragic intensity of his death-scene in *Faust* was his *chef d'œuvre*. Here he left all rivals even further behind than in the parts of Pizarro and Caspar.

I afterwards heard Mario as Faust ; but I much regret that I never heard him or Grisi until the very end of their career. I had before this heard Grisi twice, in two of her very last farewell appearances ; for she kept on returning to the stage until her voice was a complete wreck. I heard her first in *Norma*, and in spite of the defects of her voice, she made a vivid impression on me. She was a great dramatic singer and a great actress, a mistress of expressive gesture, and her stage presence was magnificent. I heard her for the last time in an awful performance of *Don Giovanni*, in the small theatre in Limerick, where Madame Rudersdorf took the part of Elvira, and Tito Palmieri, a very capable tenor, with a robust and rather metallic voice, and a vibrating "high chest C," that of Ottavio. The rest of the company sang some in Italian and some in English, and the orchestra was indescribably well-meaning in its inefficiency. This time Grisi's efforts to give effect to her grand dramatic conceptions with her much impaired voice were quite tragic, and at first it was painful to listen to her notes, in which the "ruins of time" were so perceptible ; but as the opera went on she sang better and better. Her pluck and passion carried her through, and her acting was full of fire, her poses and gestures magnificent to the last. I well remember the *abandon* with which she flung herself on her knees beside the body of her slain father, and rose with

the dust of the stage begriming the skirt of her white robe. Tietjens used carefully to arrange hers so that the fallen Commendatore preserved it from this defilement.

Mario's voice, when I heard him in *Faust*, was also much impaired, but not such a wreck as Grisi's, and he had it in much better control. His lower notes had then something of a baritone quality, his middle register was decidedly the worse for wear; but he used his still beautiful falsetto, and indeed what remained of a most sympathetic voice, with all the skill of an admirable artist. In the transformation scene his furred gown, which should have vanished instantaneously through the trap-door, caught in some portion of the elegant dress he wore underneath it, and checked him for a moment in getting rid of his cap, grey hair and beard. He flung them coolly into the wings, disengaged himself from his gown, and in a moment he had stepped forward to the footlights, the very prince of gay gallants. "Salve dimora" had, I think, to be transposed a tone lower for him, and he sang it, as indeed all the music of the part, with exquisite expression.

Afterwards I saw him in his last appearance in *La Favorita*, and he sang and acted with a quite youthful dramatic fervour. His breaking of his sword before flinging it at the king's feet was thrilling.

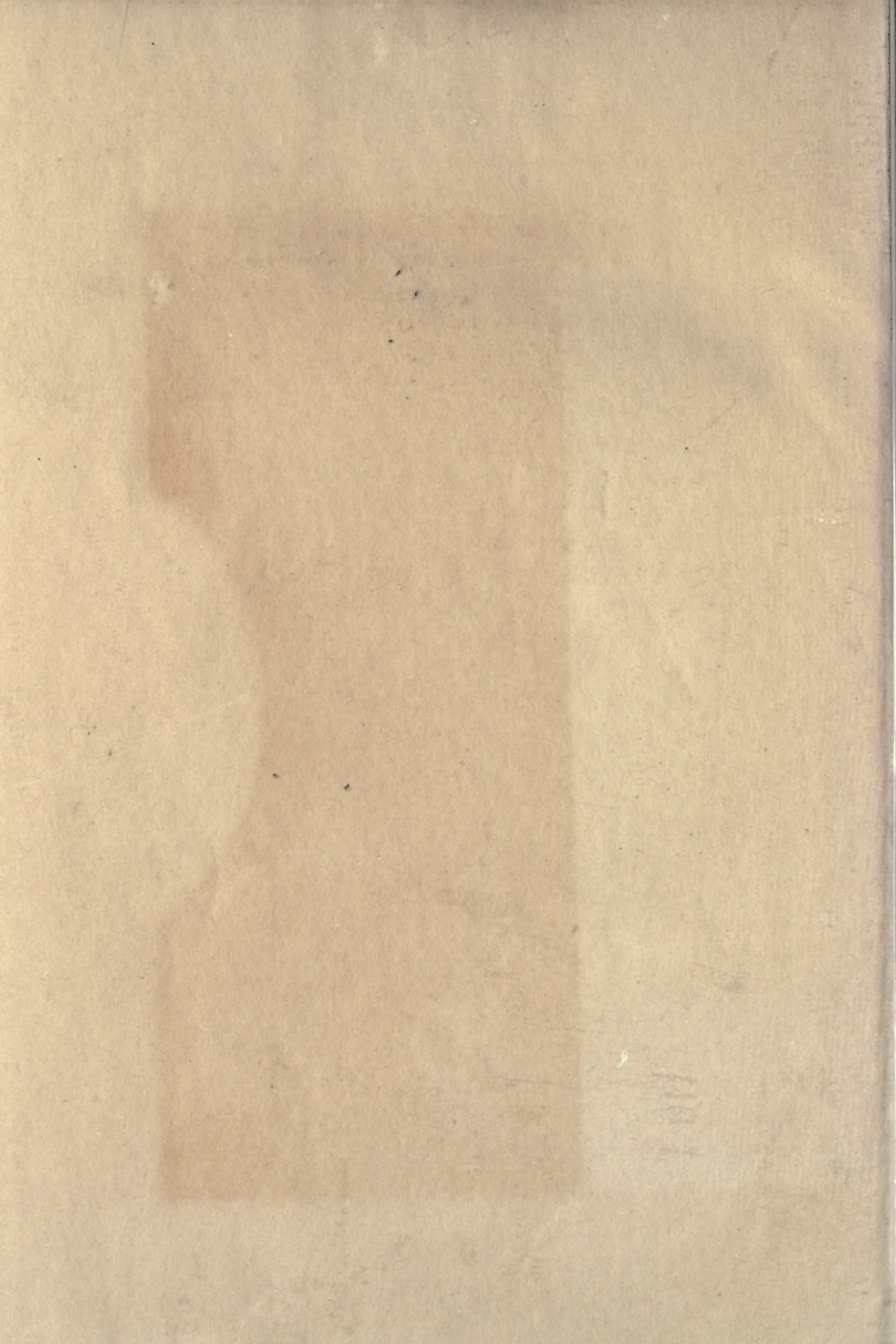
Tietjens was the Margherita when I heard Mario in *Faust*. She was always fine in her rendering of the music of this part, especially in the church scene, but not nearly so sympathetic as Christine Nilsson, the Margherita *par excellence*—so beautiful, so girlish, so tender, so impassioned, so innocently tragic.

I first heard Nilsson in Paris, in the early days of her fame, in Ambroise Thomas's *Hamlet*. Her voice was the loveliest soprano I have ever heard, fresh, pure and silvery in all its intonations, and with a rare emotional quality ; while its timbre might be compared to the soft and tender opalescence of a fine pearl. Every note she sang seemed to come straight from her heart, and the charm of her personality made itself felt in the spontaneous grace of her acting.

Faust was my first introduction to modern operatic music ; for *Faust* was modern in those pre-Wagnerian days. The music which moved us in those simpler times, before the now dying decadence had begun, was very different from that which excites us now. Orchestral composition and orchestral playing have been wonderfully developed since then, and the great modern conductors have made their bands magnificent solo instruments of emotional expression, but the art of writing for voices and the art of singing have suffered much in the process. A hundred students can write decently for an orchestra, with a feeling for "orchestral colour," for one who can write a natural melody or develop a theme when he has found one. Harmony, once the handmaid of melody, has become the tyrant of her gentler sister, whom she "should support, not suffocate," as Dr Burney racily puts it. As to the art of singing, the coarse declamatory methods of the later school have done much to destroy the old pure quality of tone and delicacy of phrasing, and have thus deprived the singer of half his heritage. He faces his audience with a maimed and distorted organ, and the younger

generation begin to find him a bore, and perhaps even to sigh for a Wagner opera without the vocal parts. They do not realise that in this ruining of the voice a whole province of musical beauty has been left desolate.





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